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SAND BLAST

MINEHUNTERS MAKING THE GULF SAFE

A SWIRLING sand-storm from the Arabian peninsula engulfs an Anglo-American force of minehunters; pictured here is HMS Blyth framed by USS Scout and Gladiator. Historic enmities have been set aside as Kuwaiti and Iraqi forces joined with the Allies to sweep the northern Gulf of the lost relics of war – banishing a barrier to trade on the high seas... See pages 14-15

Picture: LA(Phot) Chris Winter, FRPU West





Fleet Focus

REMEMBER NATO? Yes, the Cold War might be long since gone, but the military force which was the Allied sword for 40 years lives on.

And in its post-September 11 role, it's a very different beast, as **HMS Somerset** are finding on their Mediterranean deployment. We joined them for a week (see pages 25-28).

Further east in the Med, **HMS Illustrious** was treated to an impromptu display from the Red Arrows, practising over Cyprus while Lusty re-supplied (see page 7).

Lusty was heading for Istanbul to meet the Queen having led Britain's involvement in Exercise Konkan08.

The war games run by the Indian Navy saw **HMS Westminster**, **814 NAS**, and **Illustrious** pit their wits against **HMS Trafalgar** and an Indian submarine, while **RFA's Wave Knight** and **Fort Victoria** provided logistical support (see pages 8-9).

Westminster has since broken away from the Orion 08 task force and remains on stand-by off Burma following the country's devastating cyclone (see page 5).

Also detached from the group is **HMS Edinburgh**, currently in Singapore for multi-national war games (see page 9).

Orion 08 has bagged much of the media attention this spring, but the principal concentration of RN effort and forces remains in the Arabian Gulf.

HMS Manchester continues to guard the carrier USS Harry S Truman, which received an usual visitor in the shape of a 'Bagger' Sea King from **857 NAS** (see page 4).

At the tip of the Gulf, **HMS Chatham** has replaced her sister **Campbeltown** ensuring no harm comes to Iraq's oil platforms (see page 6).

No harm should come to any tankers filling their holds at the platforms, either, thanks to the efforts of a multi-national minehunting force including HM Ships **Chiddingfold**, **Atherstone**, **Ramsey** and **Blyth** (see pages 14-15).

And also helping to safeguard Iraq's future is an RN-led **Explosive Ordnance Disposal** team, currently ridding the country of illegal weapons and ammunition (see opposite).

Half a world away, and several degrees Celsius cooler, **HMS Endurance** is undergoing some TLC in the Falklands after her exertions around the ice, giving her sailors the chance to explore the islands (see page 13).

Right, that's enough about cool waters. Time to return to the warmth. **HMS Richmond** visited Miami ahead of sonar trials in the Bahamas (see page 7).

Carrier **HMS Ark Royal** has left the US behind and returned to Portsmouth, but not before testing her guns in the mid-Atlantic (see right).

HMS Ledbury didn't need to go that far to blast away with her 30mm. She's gearing up for a NATO deployment with extensive training in Scotland (see right).

A proverbial stone's throw from Ledbury, **HMS Daring** has once again been wowing allcomers as she conducts her second series of trials around the Firth of Clyde (see pages 20-21).

Daring will one day replace **HMS Exeter**, but don't write off the old lady of the Fleet just yet. She's our ship of the month (see page 12).

And it's not just destroyers which can deal with an air threat. Frigate **HMS Lancaster** is the latest Type 23 to test the effectiveness of her Seawolf missiles (see page 5).

Her sister **Iron Duke** has been in Hull on a hometown visit, as have **HMS Middleton** and **HMS Grimsby** which have called on their affiliated towns (see page 11).

The movements of all these ships – and many more – are directed by the **Commander-in-Chief Fleet**. The current incumbent of the post, Admiral Sir Mark Stanhope, gives us an overview of the state of the Royal Navy in 2009 (see page 10).

And finally, hats off to the men and women of the **RN Photographic Branch** whose work is the mainstay of this paper. The very finest of their portfolio – the winning entries in the coveted Peregrine Trophy – can be seen on pages 18-19.



'The guns, thank God, the guns...'

NOW this is something you couldn't do on fishery patrol...

AB(MW) 'RF' Fay blasts away with HMS Ledbury's 30mm main gun during a gunnery serial in Scotland.

Normally, it wouldn't look quite as dramatic as this...

... but some left-over grease ignited as the first round left the barrel, hence this rather impressive sheet of flame emerging from the gun.

Even more impressive was the fact that the junior rating hit the target with his first shot, earning him the distinction of 'ship's hawkeye'.

The Portsmouth-based Hunt-class warship finally lowered the Fishery Protection Squadron's standard this spring, allowing her to return to her core duty: minehunting.

And so upon returning to sea after Easter leave, the ship left the Solent and headed to Faslane, home of the small ships and mine

warfare section of the Flag Officer Sea Training.

FOST for minehunters is pretty much the same as it is for their larger cousins: fire, floods, all manner of breakdowns and other spanners thrown in the works by those FOSTie gremlins.

And because she's a minehunter, there's some mines to deal with, littering the seas off those perennially-bickering nations Brownie and Mustardia.

"So far Ledbury's put an awful lot of effort into this training and the ship's company are getting lots of benefit out of it," said CO Lt Cdr Paul Russell.

"It's great to see advancements being made across the board."

For good measure, the ship's bridge team earned their WECDIS spurs, allowing the ship to sail using her electronic charts.

She'll soon be doing that. She joins a NATO minehunting force later this summer.

Ledbury's not the only ship

which has been loosing a few rounds at sea.

Returning home from exercising with the US Navy and Marine Corps off the Eastern Seaboard, Ark Royal used the broad expanse of the Atlantic to test her close-defence weaponry.

After spending the daytime checking their guns, the gunnery team donned their night vision goggles as darkness descended on the ocean, while the operations room ensured a range was cleared in the Atlantic.

And then all hell let loose as a number of rounds were fired by four aimers.

"These firings are essential so that Ark can protect herself during the day and night from fast inshore attack craft threat when she closes in on land in her current amphibious role," said Lt Cdr Nick Palethorpe, the carrier's Principal Warfare Officer (Air).

Picture: AB(MW) 'Rocky' Orr, HMS Ledbury

Carriers get green light

AFTER months of speculation, rumour and doubt, the Government has committed to the Navy's future carrier project.

It has signed a deal with shipbuilders to begin work on Her Majesty's Ships Queen Elizabeth and Prince of Wales, much bigger and more potent replacements for the existing carriers.

Although orders have been placed for various systems and machinery for the two vessels, including the hydraulic lifts to raise aircraft from the hangar to the flight deck, rumours have persisted that the Government would pull the plug on the project.

Defence Procurement Minister Baroness Taylor announced, however, that Whitehall would sign the deal with industry, giving the green light to the two 65,000-ton leviathans.

As with the Type 45 destroyers, the carriers will be built in segments by BAE Systems in Barrow and on the Clyde, by VT in Portsmouth, and by Babcock in Devon.

The contract means that the shipbuilding arms of VT and BAE will effectively merge to pool their resources and expertise.

The gigantic 'jigsaw' will be pieced together by Babcock in Rosyth, where work has already begun altering the yard so these ships can fit in.

As things stand, the carriers will be around 280m (918ft) long and 70m (229ft) wide and displace more than three times the tonnage of Ark Royal, Invincible and Illustrious from which they will take over.

Each ship will carry up to 40 aircraft, a mix of Sea King and Merlin helicopters and Joint Strike Fighter jets.

"These ships will transform the UK's defence capabilities when they enter service, delivering air power in support of the full range of future operations at sea, in the air and on land," said a delighted First Sea Lord Admiral Sir Jonathon Band.

Upwards of 10,000 people will be involved in construction of the sisters at the peak of production.

The ships will join the Fleet in 2014 and 2016 (not 2012 and 2015 as originally forecast) and are expected to serve the nation for up to 50 years.

THIS is the dramatic moment several tonnes of ordnance exploded sending rivulets of fire and a million pieces of charred and scarred metal hurtling through the desert night.

And a matelet was pressing the button...

For the first time, a team of Royal Navy divers are heading the Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) team at Basra airbase, the hub of British operations in southern Iraq.

The team is led by Lt Jason White (of Southern Diving Group in Portsmouth), aided by CPO Willie Sharp and Diver 1 'Screech' Whiting (both from the Northern Diving Group in Faslane).

All three are qualified clearance divers, specialising in underwater demolitions and disposal.

The only substantial water at Basra, however, is the Shatt al Arab, the central vein of Iraq which runs into the northern Gulf, 40 miles to the south.

So this isn't exactly typical work for the divers.

Then again, a bomb is a bomb...

Five years after the fall of Saddam, there remain vast quantities of unexploded ordnance in Iraq

– the sort of thing you really do not want falling into the insurgents' hands.

Indeed, there were more than six tonnes of munitions to get rid of at the Basra Operations Centre alone.

The operations centre – the former Shatt al Arab Hotel in northern Basra – is the HQ of the Iraqi Army in the city.

It's also the place where all the ordnance bagged by security operations – as well as some handed in by locals – was stored awaiting disposal.

All manner of weapons had been collected at the hotel: Iranian-made rockets, mines, components of roadside bombs.

They could not, of course, be blown up in the heart of a metropolis.

So they were carefully packed into containers, driven out into the desert and blasted to eternity in a series of controlled explosions.

"By getting rid of six tonnes of unexploded ordnance we achieved two things – we made the operations centre a much safer place and we've reduced the scale of the problem, making it easier for the Iraqi Army to deal with what remains," said Lt White.

Typically, RN divers deal with any unexploded ordnance found below the high-water mark around UK shores.

"In Iraq we have more of a generic role, dealing with disposal of ammunition and ordnance alongside our counterparts from the other two Services," Lt White explained.

"This has been a really good opportunity for clearance divers to show our capabilities to the wider bomb disposal community, and once again this is a good example of the Royal Navy punching above its weight."

The team has been deployed to Iraq for a six-month tour – and not all its disposal work is high and dry.

Some of the munitions at the Shatt al Arab hotel were blown up the more usual RN way – underwater, courtesy of piers which run into the river.



Fire in the night



Liverpool's good casa

THE first port of call in the Americas for HMS Liverpool was the party capital of Rio.

Benevolence not beer was on the minds of the ship's company as they left the Type 42 destroyer and headed into the Brazilian metropolis.

Their first port of call was Casa Roger Turner, a shelter for Rio's street children named in honour of a former British naval attaché.

All sections of the ship's company grappled with clearing rubbish and discarded building materials from a recently-erected structure at the orphanage, fixed wiring and painted walls, while the comms team rebuilt an old PC and hooked it up to the web.

Back aboard Liverpool, the caterers' spare time was devoured by crafting a cake – fittingly in the shape of the Type 42 – which was promptly handed over to children.

Casa Roger Turner is not the only orphanage for Rio's street children; a perennial recipient of RN and RFA aid is Casa Jimmy (named after Led Zeppelin guitarist Jimmy Page).

It also received a visit from the Liverpool sailors who spruced up the building.

As for the ship, she's just replaced HMS Nottingham as Britain's representative in the South Atlantic, joining HMS Clyde in and around the Falklands.

High and dry

THERE'S nothing like a routine call-out.

Boat. Stranded. Loch Lomond. Skipper overboard. Send help.

And so HMS Gannet scrambled one of her Sea Kings with Lt Cdr Brian Nicholas, Lts Liv Miles and Tim Barker, and winchman Flt Sgt Euan Gibson bound for the famous Scottish lake.

The skipper was indeed in the waters of Loch Lomond.

And his boat was indeed stranded. Just not in the lake.

No, what the Prestwick fliers found was a speedboat a good 30ft from the water's edge, half resting in a bunker at Loch Lomond Golf Course.

"It's got to be one of the strangest shouts I've ever been on," said aircraft commander and Gannet CO Lt Cdr Nicholas.

"We do quite routinely get called out to rescue people in the water, but to get there and find the boat high and dry was quite amazing."

"Luckily the boat's owner had managed to jump clear of his craft before it hit the shore and he made his own way out to dry land."

"In the end, the man was uninjured and that was a good result – I guess the only thing damaged was probably his pride."

The boat was eventually returned to its more usual surroundings thanks to a lot of elbow grease.



Picture: LA(Phot) Steve Johncock, FRPU West

'You come back as another person...'

IN THE dark days after losing his legs and right arm to a mine blast in Helmand, Mne Mark Ormrod set himself his goal.

He would stand shoulder-to-shoulder with his comrades and walk proudly to receive his campaign medal.

On a sparkling spring afternoon in Somerset, the 24-year-old crossed the parade ground at Norton Manor watched by the men he fought alongside, his family and 2,000 friends and loved ones of 40 Commando.

"I really had to work hard to receive my medal. To be walking for this has been such an achievement," said Mark.

"If it had taken me half an hour to walk across to my Troop, I would have done it."

The green beret was gravely wounded during a patrol on Christmas Eve.

He has spent the past three months learning to use his prosthetic legs at Headley Court,

the military's specialist rehabilitation centre.

The struggle to walk again was most definitely worth it.

"Today was awesome," he enthused. "To get up, walk and stand there – and then get back – was a very proud moment."

He sat down next to fellow amputee Mne Ben McBean, who lost his left leg and right arm in Afghanistan – and who also had stood up and walked across the parade ground to receive his medal.

Ben hit the headlines earlier this year after being hailed a hero by Prince Harry – who returned from Helmand on the same flight as the Royal in March.

Like Mark, his goal was to walk in front of friends, family and comrades this day.

Unlike Mark, however, he had only three weeks to learn to walk again.

"All Royal Marines are positive



people – we believe in getting up on our feet and just cracking on," said Ben.

"It has been the proudest day of my life, but this isn't just about me. The lads getting their medals today are all heroes."

Guest of honour at the ceremony, Second Sea Lord Vice Admiral Sir Adrian Johns. He told the Royals: "Success

is not easy and there is a price to pay. Three men paid the highest price."

Those three men were Lt John Thornton, Cpl Damian Mulvihill and Mne David Marsh; 25 comrades were seriously injured during 40's six-month tour of duty.

Injured or not, all men of 40 Commando returned to Norton Manor changed by their experiences in Afghanistan.

"You go to Afghanistan as one person but you come back as another. It makes a man of you," said Mne Will Charters.

Images of the young green beret carrying an Afghan girl wounded in a Taliban mortar attack were flashed around the world (and won the photographer a prestigious award – see pages 18 and 19).

"Even the smallest things which you once took for granted such as flicking on a light switch, you now appreciate. You see things differently," Will added.

For 40 Commando's CO, Lt Col Stuart Birrell, the parade ceremony was as much about saying 'thank you' to families for their constant support while the men were in Helmand.

"Without their support, we simply could not do the job we do. It is their letters, their parcels which keep us going when times are hard," he added.

And so with the formal ceremony over, the Royal Marines laid on a display for their supporters before serving up a rather large barbecue.

The green berets are now enjoying some well-deserved leave before returning to duties at Norton Manor at the end of this month.

THIS is not something you see every day... A 'Bagger' Sea King of 857 NAS prepares to set down on the sprawling flight deck of the USS Harry S Truman in the Arabian Gulf.

The airborne surveillance and control helicopters have been in the Gulf region since last February, using their sophisticated radar to monitor the sealanes.

They are currently detached to aviation training ship RFA Argus.

But the one Bagger left the auxiliary behind for a spell aboard the Truman, sharing ideas (and perhaps the odd dit) with their USN counterparts, the E2C Hawkeye teams who perform a similar role in their fixed-wing aircraft.

"This was a great opportunity for us to see how the Americans go about their business and a preview of how operations might look on HMS Queen Elizabeth or Prince of Wales," said Lt Martin Russell.

Their visit to the Truman – which is being escorted on its Gulf deployment by HMS Manchester – was assisted by the fact that a fellow 'Bagman' is serving aboard the supercarrier: Lt Cdr 'Sparky' Gill is a UK liaison officer on the flat-top's battlestaff.

As for 857, it was formed in late 2006 when 849 NAS and its two flights were turned into three distinctive squadrons.

As well as flying surveillance missions from Argus, the Sea Kings have a secondary role of providing a Search and Rescue service for Allied warships, which means a sizeable chunk of the helicopters' time is spent on practice missions and drills – often involving Argus' doc, Surg Lt Stuart McKechnie.

Location, Re-location, Detonation

A WARTIME bomb was finally blown up by naval divers after a week-long operation continually hampered by bad spring weather.

Indeed so bad were conditions that the 500kg German device shifted from the safe spot of seabed the team from Southern Diving Group had moved it to.

It took Remus – the RN's torpedo-shaped robot mini submarine – to find the bomb once more with its hi-tech sonar after strong currents had carried it away.

The saga began when a digger improving sea defences near Felixstowe dragged up the bomb on April 21.

By the following day, the SDG team from Horsea Island had towed the weapon out to sea and were preparing to blow it up.

Bad weather, terrible visibility and horrific currents – the latter prevented the divers attaching a charge to the bomb – thwarted their efforts.

Once re-located on April 29, the divers could resume their destructive work.

The bomb was found in about 30ft of water a little over a mile off the Felixstowe seafront.

When it was blown up in the fading light of April 29 it sent a plume of water 200ft into the air and rattled homes more than two miles away.

Taste of Kent for Jersey

FRIGATE HMS Kent was the RN's representative at the inaugural Jersey Boat Show – and by far the largest vessel on display.

Indeed most of the craft on show to the public were superyachts, speedboats and the like.

The ship's company hosted a stand ashore explaining the role of their ship and today's Senior Service, while the chefs, sorry logisticians (catering services (preparation)), prepared food for a lunch hosted by the Commanding Officer Cdr Simon Hopper and an official reception (held ashore but plastic seagull decorations gave it a suitably nautical flavour...).

The ship also hosted a 'defence industry day', demonstrating to some of Jersey's movers and shakers what Kent is capable of: the frigate's Lynx and seaboot buzzed about, the ship conducted high-speed manoeuvres, crew tackled imaginary fires and the ops room thwarted an (imaginary) air attack.

The stand-off in the Channel Islands was a welcome break for the Portsmouth-based warship as it came just before the final week of Operational Sea Training, which would determine Kent's readiness to head off on impending deployment.



(Sea) King for a day

Coastguards bewitched by Merlin

PRACTICE makes perfect – especially when it's a manoeuvre you don't normally perform.

The RNLI and Falmouth Coastguard are used to working with helicopters from RNAS Culdrose.

Just not with Merlins.

But with 824 Naval Air Squadron due to perform at Southend Air Show last month, they needed to hone their boat transfer skills – one of the evolutions that would be watched by thousands of people off the Essex coast.

The Sea Kings of 771 NAS, Culdrose's Search and Rescue unit, regularly work with the Falmouth RIBs – boat transfers in challenging conditions are the staple diet of the SAR team.

This was the first time that the RIBs had worked with a Merlin, however.

They experienced first-hand the dramatic effect of the helicopter's much stronger downwash.

Several runs were carried out employing weighted bags initially before the Merlin men began transferring people from ship to helicopter and back again.

"This was an excellent opportunity to get some high-quality training before doing the same evolutions in front of the crowds in my home town of Southend," said PO 'Mac' MacMeikan, who organised the training day.

The exercise allowed the RNLI crews to get used to the differences of operating with the Merlin, and allowing the aircar to gain valuable training operating to such a challenging (and small) vessel under way.

Revenge of the big bad wolf

YOU wait a couple of years to see a Seawolf launch...

... and then three come along in the space of as many months. After Her Majesty's Ships Westminster and Somerset had launched their aircraft interceptor missiles, so too did HMS Lancaster as she geared up for an impending deployment.

Now we could show you a picture of the firing...

... but as we've had a few of those recently, we thought we'd show this rather steely picture of the Red Rose frigate leaving Faslane, because one Seawolf launch from a Type 23 is pretty much the same as the next.

But that doesn't make it any less impressive – or for that matter challenging for the weapon engineering department and operations room team; the former had to prepare Seawolf, the radars which are its eyes and the computers which serve as its brain, and the latter had to identify and track their prey, before locking on and eventually flicking the firing switch.

The prey came in the shape of drones trailed from a spotter plane. There's not a lot of the former left after the missile impacted with it, scattering fragments over the Channel in a dramatic dénouement.

So the weapon works. What of the 180 or so men and women aboard Lancaster who are responsible for it – and much more besides?

Well, the successful Seawolf launches were the curtain-raiser to two months under the Flag Officer Sea Training in Devonport – a test which comes just days after outgoing CO Cdr Richard Moss handed the reins of Lancaster to Cdr Rory Bryan (indeed, the Seawolf launches came on just his second day in command).

The Portsmouth-based ship prepared herself for FOST with a string of trials and exercises through the spring, including spells in the Irish Sea, and the waters around the Clyde and Vigo in Spain.

Once she comes through FOST, she'll be off to the Baltic for a multi-national war game.

Picture: PO(Phot) Mez Merrill, FRPU Clyde



Westminster on Burmese stand-by

FRIGATE HMS Westminster broke away from the rest of the Orion 08 task force to possibly offer aid to the Burmese.

The Department for International Development asked for the RN's assistance in the wake of Cyclone Nargis.

The storm wreaked havoc in the former British colony, causing at least 43,000 deaths – and possibly killing as many as 100,000 Burmese.

Hundreds of thousands more were deprived of shelter and the most basic commodities and amenities.

Although the world immediately offered assistance to Rangoon, the response of the Burmese military government was lukewarm to say the least: it welcomed some international aid, but not the aid workers who would distribute it.

Westminster's 198 sailors received disaster relief training at FOST before embarking on the Orion 08 deployment.

The frigate has most recently been operating in the Bay of Bengal on an Anglo-French-Indian exercise (see pages 8 and 9 for more details).

The British Government has offered the services of the Portsmouth-based Type 23 frigate as a possible command platform for relief operations.

Besides her Merlin helicopter, she also carries two sea boats, a ship's doctor and medical assistant, plus medical supplies.

Westminster was steaming in international waters off the Burmese coast awaiting developments as *Navy News* went to press.

The nexus of sisters-in-war

MUCH as HMS Albion has one of the finest command suites afloat, you can't direct your war from there forever.

Eventually, you'll have to move ashore, as 100 planners discovered during an exercise off Torpoint.

HMS Albion (furthest from the camera, below, in LA(Phot) Dan Hooper's image) has just completed exercise Aquatic Nexus – an exercise that tested the command and control structure whilst afloat and the logistics of moving a large HQ ashore.

It began with the staff spending five days aboard the amphibious assault ship to test their ability to plan a major landing operation – in this case carrying out UN resolutions to stop one fictitious African nation invading her neighbour.

Albion has a sprawling operations room which serves the needs both of the ship herself and, more importantly, her embarked forces (usually elements of 3 Commando Brigade and the Commander UK Amphibious Forces).

With the landing successfully planned, the staff then shifted from ship to shore – with the aim of ensuring that leadership ashore was every bit as comprehensive as it was aboard Albion... and that the (imaginary) landing force remained under firm control throughout.

HMS Raleigh was chosen to host the invaders. One late April morning the Torpoint training establishment was buzzing with unusual activity as landing craft and helicopters ferried the staff and all their kit and caboodle, including their complex computer system and server with details of the operation, safely ashore.

While her sister was practising landings, HMS Bulwark was carrying them out at the opposite end of the land.

The assault ship led the British input in Joint Warrior, the latest name for what was the Joint Maritime Course and, more recently, Neptune Warrior.

The names change, but the aim remains the same: to practise the art of war by land, sea and air over a fortnight with a

smörgåsbord of Allied forces.

More than 30 Allied units – aircraft, warships, submarines, ground troops – gathered off western Scotland, drawn from 27 nations including Germany, France, Turkey, Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain, Portugal, Poland and the USA.

The land element of Joint Warrior has typically been fairly notional, but this time real soldiers were put ashore. Those real soldiers were 3rd Battalion the Rifles, joining Bulwark – escorted by frigate HMS Portland – for the amphibious stage of the war game.

It was Bulwark's mission to safely put the soldiers ashore so they could evacuate civilians as chaos raged around them – an operation Britain's armed forces have become well versed in through the years, from Aden to the Lebanon.

And so it was that early one spring morning 3 Rifles began to trudge ashore from Bulwark's landing craft on to a remote Scottish beach. They then marched 20km (12½ miles) down roads and across fields (with the landowner's permission, naturally) to set up a forward base camp and begin the evacuation.

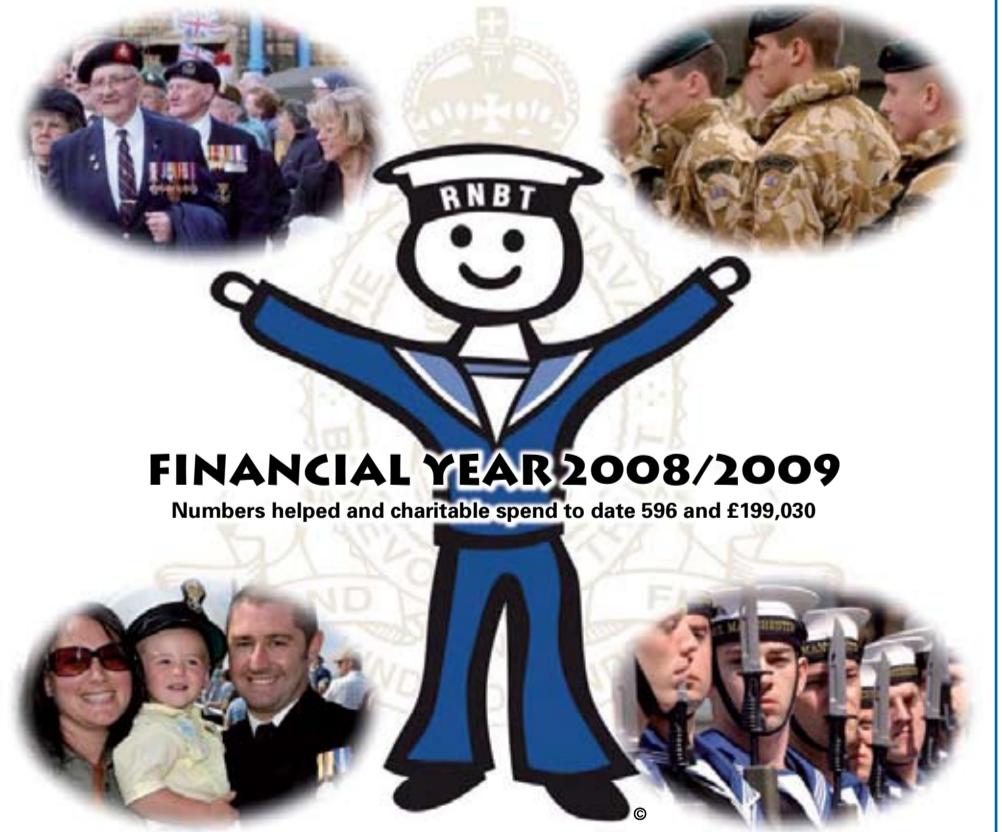
Peace invariably, though not inevitably, follows war. With her part in Joint Warrior done, Bulwark headed across the Irish Sea for her inaugural visit to Belfast – a year after her sister first called on the Northern Ireland city.

Over four days, the ship's company hosted a number of local schools, Sea Cadets from units across the province (including 40 who sailed with the assault ship from Belfast to Liverpool), as well as members of RNA, the Malaysia-Borneo Association, civic dignitaries and the RN's senior officer in Northern Ireland, Rear Admiral Philip Jones.

"Belfast has become a popular port visit for the Royal Navy due to the hospitality of the people and growing vibrancy of the city and my ship's company were excited about the visit," said Bulwark's CO Capt Jeremy Blunden.



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'You helped my country'

T'S farewell to the Gulf for 250 Type 22 sailors...

... and hello to the Gulf for another 250 Type 22 sailors (plus one mouse) as **HMS Campbeltown** and **Chatham** trade places.

The former is now home in Devonport after 221 days away – more than half of them eaten up by patrolling the KAAOT and ABOT oil terminals just off Iraq.

... and the latter is now safeguarding said terminals after being handed Campbeltown's baton.

The sisters spent 24 hours swapping relevant information, papers, documents and the likes so that Chatham was fully apprised of some of the issues Campbeltown had faced and could effortlessly take over from her.

"There's no doubt that we've had a tremendously successful deployment," said Campbeltown's CO Cdr Gordon Abernethy.

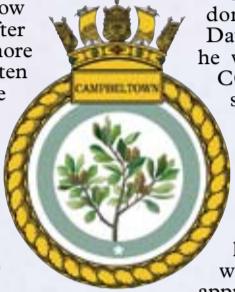
"We all missed our families tremendously – they have given us all a great deal of support. They know that we have an important job to do and the ship's company should feel proud of what we have achieved."

The sea boat teams should feel especially proud of their efforts.

The frigate has two Pacific 22 RIBS in the water daily conducting the boarding/policing patrols around the two rigs.

That has placed demands on the boats far beyond their original specifications.

And it has, of course, placed huge demands on the boarding



parties, engineers and seamen who use them.

It was nevertheless a bit of a surprise when seven sailors were singled out for a Herbert Lott Award for their teamwork and efficiency in ensuring the Pacifics were always ready.

"I wondered what I had done wrong," said AB David Patterson when he was summoned to the CO's cabin. "I was really surprised – and relieved – when I found out what it was for."

CPO 'Olly' Campbell added: "It's really nice to get the recognition and know that the hard work we have put in is appreciated. We've all taken great pride in ensuring the boats were ready for operations at all times."

From superhero efforts to superhero efforts.

Chatham is now in charge, assisted by her mascot Mighty Mouse (although quite what 8in of plastic rodent can bring to the Gulf operation is anyone's guess).

The mascot (apparently) conducted a flypast of Chatham and Campbeltown as they swapped places; so too did the ships' respective Lynx helicopters.

Mouse and men, Cdr Martin Connell, Chatham's CO, believe both are equally prepared for the task ahead.

"We are taking over one of the most important missions the Royal Navy is undertaking currently," he added.

"My crew are ready to carry out the task and relishing the challenges ahead."

As for Campbeltown, she's now brought the curtain down on a seven-month deployment which began with Operation Calash off East Africa, keeping tabs on illegal



● Campbeltown's ship's company pose for a memento of their Gulf deployment before leaving Iraqi waters

activity at sea, then shifted to the Gulf as she relieved HMS Argyll.

Before turning for home, she and her Royal Marines detachment laid on a rapid roping demonstration on to the Khawr Al Amaya Oil Terminal showing how quickly the platform's defences could be bolstered.

The demonstration was watched by the head of the Iraqi Navy, Admiral Jawad, who also visited

the Type 22.

"Maybe we won't remember each man after three or four years but sure we will remember your countries – when you helped my country during this critical time," he told those Royal Navy and Royal Marines personnel working alongside his countryfolk.

"My appreciation and thanks to you and your families."

His praise was reinforced by

one of the two senior RN officers in theatre, Cdr Duncan Potts.

The commodore oversees operations by **Combined Task Force 158**, an international group of warships, assisted by Iraqi sailors and marines, which protects the platforms.

Cdr Potts took charge of the force earlier this year and made it his first task to get out and about to gain a feeling for the mission.

That culminated with a major conference by maritime leaders in Doha, Qatar, attended by 16 navies, in particular those from the United Arab Emirates, Pakistan, India, France and the USA, with HMS Campbeltown representing the RN.

"Iraq might be regarded by many as a land-locked country, but she does have access to the sea, and whilst her territorial waters may be small, I like to think of them as the vital umbilical that feeds the economy," said Cdr Potts.

"My mission is simple; it's really to provide the level of security and stability in this part of the world until the Iraqis themselves can take on that responsibility; and that forms the second part of my mission – which is helping the Iraqi Navy and Marines to bring themselves on to take that responsibility back from the coalition."

Not all the Senior Service's efforts at the tip of the Gulf are focused at sea: until recently **847 Naval Air Squadron** were working side-by-side with ground forces around Basra.

In doing so, the Lynx fliers collected one of naval aviation's most coveted awards – the Bambara Flight Safety Trophy – for its outstanding record over the past 12 months.

Flying the Mark 9 wheeled version of the Lynx, 847 aircrew carried out a wide-range of missions from convoy escort duties and aerial surveillance to supporting counter-insurgency operations by ground forces.

Dangers faced by the Lynx aircrew were matched by dangers faced by the ground teams in Basra; the airbase came under regular attack from mortars and small arms fired by insurgents.

Upon their return from Iraq, some of 847 immediately deployed to northern Norway for Arctic training while those left behind took some welcome leave or headed off on adventurous training.

Finally all back together at Yeovil, it was time for the squadron's day in the sun, with a parade ceremony involving 847's RM and FAA personnel in front of their friends and families.

Cdr Jerry Stanford, Assistant Chief of Staff (Carrier Strike Aviation), presented the Bambara Trophy – in true naval tradition – to the youngest member of the squadron, AET Lee Morfett.

The squadron is now gearing man and machine for the next tour of duty: Afghanistan. There will team up with their sister Jungle squadrons, 845 and 846 NAS.

"It is absolutely right and proper that personnel from the Commando Helicopter Force and 847 in particular, whose performance has been first class in demanding operational circumstances under extreme environmental conditions are recognised publicly, on a parade such as this," said Maj Lenny Brown RM, 847's CO.



● 'One of the most important missions the Royal Navy is undertaking currently'... HMS Chatham sails past the Khawr al Amaya terminal in the northern Gulf

Picture: LA(Phot) Chris Winter, FRPU West



THIS is an unmistakeable sight set against sparkling eastern Mediterranean skies.

The Red Arrows look quite impressive too.

As HMS Illustrious visited Cyprus to pick up supplies on the homeward leg of her Orion 08 deployment (see pages 8 and 9), she was treated to an impromptu display by the RAF's legendary Hawk display team.

The Arrows head to Cyprus each year to practise for the impending display season (the eastern Med, unsurprisingly, offers better weather than Blighty) – training which happily coincided with Illustrious' visit.

The RAF chaps weren't doing all the work, however. Down in Lust's operations room, the air warfare team took advantage of the Red Arrows' practice session to track all nine jets as they roared towards, then over, and finally past the carrier.

Picture: PO(Phot) Christine Wood, HMS Illustrious

See us aye, Miami

CYPRIOTS do not have a monopoly on magnificent spring weather, as the good folk of HMS Richmond discovered when they visited Miami.

The Type 23 frigate spent four days in the Florida metropolis taking on stores before she made the short trip to the Bahamas for sonar trials.

Thirty days' supplies for 195 men and women needed to be crammed aboard the Portsmouth-based warship for the extensive tests.

Actually, storing ship only took five hours thanks to a Herculean effort by the ship's company. *Inter alia*, they carried 100kg of bacon, 300kg of chicken, 2,600kg of potatoes and 1,728 sausages on board.

Some of that food probably disappeared at an official reception the frigate held for Miami dignitaries, including police and Coast Guard chiefs, and Keith Allen (the British Consul General in the city, not the actor/father of singer Lily Allen).

There was also some deserved R&R for the sailors, with three expeditions organised for the adventurously-minded.

Two dozen of the ship's company headed to the beach to try their hand at surfing – three quarters of the sailors had never picked up a board.

After three hours of lessons (and the odd dunking), all could at least stand up on their boards in the ocean, some longer than others.

The more experienced boardriders (including CO Cdr Mark Southorn) moved down the beach to catch the larger waves.

Other sailors preferred a more sedate manner of riding the sea. Twenty-three Richmonders headed out into the Atlantic in the Hurricane and lowered fish pots – then waited for their prey to bite.

Catch of the day went to Lt Cdr Martin Collis for his 30lb Cobia which took 20 minutes to land. None of his shipmates came close with their hauls; second place was grabbed by POMEM George Dent and his 6lb king mackerel.

All the catches ended up on a plate at the end of the day, although the Brits generously donated the cobia to the Hurricane's crew out of gratitude for the fun day; they promptly sold it to a local Chinese restaurant for \$100 (£50).

And last, but by no means least, 15 of the ship's golfers played the Miami Shores Country Club. In perfect golfing conditions of sunshine and light winds the course still provided a significant test of golf with very fast greens proving the downfall of many.

Perfect conditions in Miami were long overdue after a particularly rough Atlantic crossing from Brest (where Richmond had been taking part in an anti-submarine exercise with the French).

At times the frigate was buffeted by winds of up to 40kts; add to that the swell on the stern quarter, which caused the ship to roll heavily (a maximum angle of roll of 25° was recorded).

Bad weather does not, of course, stop the RN going about its business: on passage, Richmond conducted noise tests, listening to her sonars to see how much noise the frigate was generating.

Such tests were vital as the ship has now fired up its ultimate piece of submarine hunting kit, Sonar 2087.

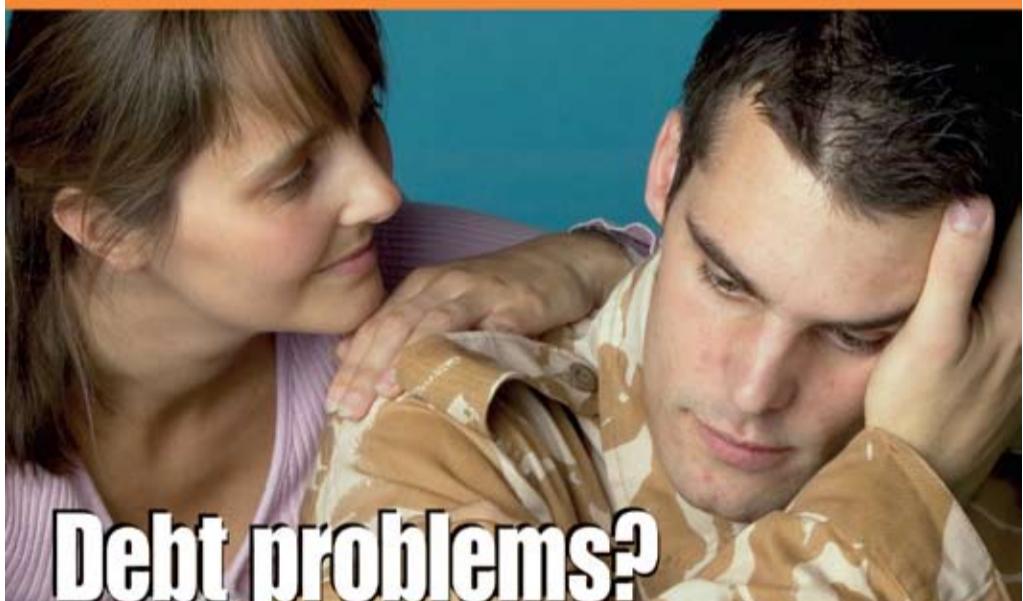
The sonar is still in its experimental stage (see pages 25-28 for the challenges sister ship Somerset has faced), so to get the most out of it in a controlled environment, the RN has sent Richmond to AUTEC, the American-run range in the Bahamas.

Its size, unique topography and the scores of sensors dotted around make it the best underwater warfare range in the world.



Just in case you were wondering where this bunch was from... Richmond's sailors head for Miami beach

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● Ahunting we will go (Pt 1)
... HMS Westminster's
armourers prepare to
fit a Stingray torpedo
to her 829 NAS Merlin





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Doing

WHILE we're 'enjoying' a British summer, the ships of Her Majesty's Navy are lapping up an Indian spring.

It's warm. It's sunny (most of the time). Just don't go in the water.

For lurking beneath the seemingly benign waves of the Indian Ocean are at least two submarines, stalking their prey.

Every two years the Indians invite friendly navies to join them for a large-scale submarine hunt.

Lusty was here two years ago – but she didn't have such a formidable sub hunting force with her then.

As we reported last month, for the first time all the Flying Tigers have embarked on the ship in their Merlin incarnation: six helicopters and 140 personnel of 814 Naval Air Squadron.

Merlin comprises half of the Orion 08 anti-submarine one-two.

The other punch is delivered by Sonar 2087, carried by HMS Westminster, which can find even the quietest of submarines at ranges well beyond existing RN sonars.

Indeed, after being the hunter for decades, the boot is now firmly on the other foot.

Feeling the full force (well, not quite the full force because live weapons were not, of course, used) of that boot were HMS Trafalgar and Indian diesel boat INS Shishumar.

Anti-submarine warfare is, as one of Lusty's principle warfare officers Lt Sally Whitehall pointed out, "something of an art".

You don't just fire up your sonar and start dipping wildly with your buoys.

Luckily, as the Flying Tigers had been aboard for three months, by the time they'd reach Indian shores, they were at the top of their game.

That was thanks in part to a little help from HMS Trafalgar. For as the Orion 08 group steamed from the Gulf of Oman to Goa, the Fleet submarine joined the task force to begin a game of cat and mouse.

"Any anti-submarine exercise can be challenging because it's not something that happens straight away – you really have to stay focussed all the time, so you need

a good team around you," said Lt Whitehall.

One of her 'good team' is LS Thomas Edenbrow who was closed up in the operations room.

"It can get pretty intense when you're hunting any threat, but this type of warfare adds that little extra excitement,"

"It's a great feeling when you finally find the submarine and engage her."

In just one week, the Merlins notched up 100 hours of flying – at times round the clock.

Indeed, the practice reached its peak with 'ripple' flying: the aircraft itself remained aloft on the hunt for more than 24 hours, landing only to change crews and refuel roughly ever six hours.

"The combination of Merlin and Westminster's 2087 makes it much harder for submarines to hide – as we demonstrated several times," said Lt Whitehall.

Lt Mark Sharples, an 814 NAS observer, enthused: "The mighty Merlin and its crews proved themselves to be a formidable anti-submarine asset – and one that submariners should not take lightly."

We would ask them, but they're prowling the Indian Ocean several hundred feet down...

This was Lusty's bread and butter during the Cold War; these days the emphasis is much more on strike and amphibious operations... but that doesn't mean that new dogs can't learn old tricks.

"The Tigers have gone from strength to strength since embarking in Illustrious in January," said 814's CO Cdr Steve Deacon.

And if hunting submarines wasn't enough to keep Team Lusty on their toes, they also had a visit from Naval Flying Standards who examine all aspects of flight operations both in the air and on the ground (or, in this case, metal box on the ocean).

So after several days of hunting submarines... the Orion force fired up for several days of hunting submarines.

● How much fun are we having? (Below) One of Westminster's sea boats races across the Indian Ocean and (left) He couldn't give a Firex for anything else... a mock casualty screams during a rather realistic fire-fighting drill in Westminster's galley



the Konkan

The Brits, French and Americans were joined by a sizeable Indian force, led by the imposing destroyer INS Mysore, INS Rajput and INS Gomati, plus a tanker.

Konkan wasn't all about things which lurk beneath the waves.

Once the boats had strutted their stuff it was time for the fast jet boys to muscle in on the exercise.

The Naval Strike Wing had left Lusty behind to return to the UK so they could prepare for their impending return to Afghanistan.

So wherefore that distinctive roar of the Pegasus engine and pointed nose?

Enter the Sea Harriers of the Indian Navy, operating out of nearby Goa (sadly India's sole carrier, the former HMS Hermes, was in refit so she couldn't attend).

We may have ditched the interceptor a couple of years ago, but the Commonwealth nation is still flying the FRS51 variant of the immortal jump jet.

Lusty towed her splash target, then waited for the Indian pilots to race in and strike it not with bombs or cannon, but rockets.

After a series of practice runs, the jets raced in to unleash dummy rockets: the first two were near misses, but by the third and fourth runs, the pilots were straddling the target.

"I expected the target to have received some damage," said PO(SEA) Neil Payne, who was monitoring the bombing runs from Illustrious' quarterdeck, "but when we recovered it, it wasn't and lives to fight another day."

"In reality, if the rockets had been full of high explosive, the target wouldn't have stood a chance."

The Orion 08 group comprises flagship Illustrious, led by Cdre Tom Cunningham, plus HMS Westminster (pictured below heading across the Bay of Bengal) and HMS Trafalgar, RFAs Fort Austin and Wave Knight, and at times, an eclectic mix of Allied warships, currently USS Cole and FS Surcouf; destroyer HMS Edinburgh has split from the group and is operating independently in the Far East – see below.

The force left UK waters in February and, after three months at sea in a tin can, several sailors with the group



opted for an even smaller tin can.

HMS Trafalgar played host to a mish-mash of sailors from the RN, RFA and US Navy – courtesy of HMS Illustrious, RFAs Wave Knight and Fort Austin and USS Cole – during a brief hiatus in anti-submarine exercises.

Space is at a premium in the hunter-killer

boats, so the visitors – some of whom had won (or was it lost?) a draw aboard their respective ships – found themselves accommodated in the bomb shop amid an array of torpedoes.

The 'tourists' breathed a sigh of relief once the boat had safely dived to periscope depth, then tucked into dinner in Trafalgar's 'compact' ward room beneath the Indian Ocean.

After a comprehensive tour of the boat (including a visit to the deep freezer), the visitors settled down to a night in rather spartan surroundings.

"Sleeping in possibly the smallest space in which most of us had

ever attempted to sleep had its own issues – not least trying not to bang your head," said one of Trafalgar's RFA visitors.

Next morning the bleary-eyed guests awoke and the smell of fresh air filled the boat as Trafalgar was back on the surface, allowing the submarine tourists to return to their skimmers.



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Meanwhile, as Illustrious and her 'chicks' were sailing around off India, Edinburgh – typically at Lusty's side as her aerial guardian – could be found initially in Pakistan.

The Type 42, which celebrated its 25th birthday this spring, headed to Karachi for a mixture of naval exercises and hands-across-the-ocean events.

So alongside there were official receptions, sporting fixtures, cocktail parties and the like.

And at sea there were exercises with PNS Babur with Edinburgh's Lynx Tallisker swapping places with Babur's Alouette

The former should have had little trouble setting down on Babur's flight deck; the ship was HMS Amazon until sold to Pakistan over a decade ago.

From Karachi, it was around the tip of India and on to Sri Lanka.

There was a brief pause to allow hands to bathe before sailing into Colombo; the sea was a balmy 29°C.

It wasn't all glorious weather, however. The Edinburgh sailors experienced their first rain (apparently) since leaving Pompey four months ago in the bustling Sri Lankan city. (The rain's impact was somewhat assuaged by the fact that it was 34°C.)

The destroyer spent just two days in Colombo – enough time for a trip to a Buddhist temple and, for those not quite so culturally minded, a karaoke bar.

And then it was further eastwards, this time for Singapore. It takes five days to sail from Sri Lanka to Sembawang, where the Fortress of the Sea prepared herself for an impending international exercise.

Edinburgh is Britain's representative at the annual Five Powers Defence Agreement Exercise, Bersama Lima (Malaysia, Singapore, Australia and New Zealand complete the quintet).

Pictures: LA(Phot) Pete Smith, FRPU West, and Darby Allen, HMS Illustrious



• A hunting we will go (Pt 2) ... A Flying Tiger of 814 NAS lifts off from Illustrious at sunrise



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'Cornwall was a wake-up call'

WITH his feet firmly under the table after six months as Britain's second ranking admiral, Commander-in-Chief Fleet Admiral Sir Mark Stanhope, (pictured), gives Navy News editor Steve Fletcher a tour d'horizon of the state of today's front-line ships, squadrons and Royal Marine units.



A WEEK, so we are told, is a long time in politics.

Three years is an eternity in the life of the Royal Navy.

When Mark Stanhope left these shores for the New World and a NATO post in 2005, HMS Daring was still riding high on a slipway; her sisters Dauntless and Diamond were little more than complex nautical jigsaws.

HMS Invincible was about to bow out of service, but a clutch of new RFA amphibious ships were on the verge of joining the Fleet.

The Second Sea Lord's organisation was lining up to merge with that of the Commander-in-Chief Fleet in new headquarters in Portsmouth.

War with the Taliban raged in Afghanistan – and still does.

British warships and sailors helped safeguard Iraq's oil platforms – and still do.

And the seizure of HMS Cornwall's boarding party by Iranians was still far in the future.

All this – and much more besides – occurred while Admiral Stanhope was serving in Norfolk.

So when he returned to the UK to take up the second most senior post in the RN, he was determined to get to know his Navy again.

"I told my staff I wanted to be out in the Fleet 50 per cent of the time for my first four months in office," he explained.

"It was hard but we managed it – I visited the Northern Arabian Gulf, and the Antarctic in Endurance, and spent time with FOST, because I wanted to see how things had changed in my three years away."

So did he find a very different Navy?

"The first thing that hadn't changed is the people, I'm glad to say. I had assumed that – but I wanted to make sure by going out and about, and if I had any doubts I've been delighted by what I've found."

"Sailors will be sailors and marines will be marines, but their quality of output and sense of purpose is phenomenal – we're just so lucky to have them."

Although the people hadn't changed, the operational tempo and the strain on people and resources had.

"The programme and tempo of operations are much busier than they were, and the Fleet is

materially more fragile," he said.

"That is a consequence of how hard we are working it, and of the deliberate decision taken four or five years ago to reduce the amount of support we were going to give our ships, to help fund the operational priorities – Iraq and Afghanistan.

"For instance, 3 Commando Brigade's deployment to Afghanistan this autumn requires a dark blue 'backfill' which amounts to one-and-a-half frigate ship's companies."

He added: "It's true that we have fewer ships but there are more commitments and therefore the programme is more difficult to manage – it's a fine balancing act between making sure ships and the people are employed doing the business the taxpayer is paying for them to do, and giving them enough time back home to maintain the ship, train and prepare themselves and have time with their families."

After five months studying the state of today's Fleet, the admiral believes "the balance needs to be adjusted because the sheer tautness of the programme is unsustainable in the longer term."

He continued: "No Admiral is ever going to say anything other than that he could do with more ships.

"But we've shaped the Navy in the last seven years to be ready to operate two carriers and we've had to plan carefully where we're going to place resources and people."

"I would mention here that whilst the new carriers will fly the White Ensign they should not be seen solely as Naval assets – they bring huge capability to defence as a whole, in the air and on the land and will be good news for our Royal Air Force and Army colleagues as well."

The carriers are, of course, not to be all and end all of the future Fleet.

"Once we have this carrier order secured – of which I am cautiously optimistic – I know the focus in

● HMS Cornwall's sea boat conducts enhanced patrols off the Khawr al Amaya oil terminal in the wake of the hostage incident

Picture: LA(Phot) Jannine Hartmann, FRPU East

terms of new equipment will be the Surface Combatant and what shape, size and scale of numbers we're looking at as to replace the Type 23s, which are getting to be old now.

"And we will be looking very much with an eye to the mantra that there is quality in quantity. We don't want to price ourselves into a market where we can only have a few limited, highly capable platforms – we'd rather maximise numbers."

"We're trying to cut our cloth to suit the resources we've got and although we can tell Ministers and civil servants what we consider we need, decisions about the size of the future Fleet or the readiness of individual ships are not made until Ministers agree them."

Like everyone else, Admiral Stanhope is hugely impressed by the Type 45 destroyer.

Six have been ordered and three are in the water. The first of class, HMS Daring, will be flying the White Ensign later this year, although she won't be deployable for another 12 months because her uniquely sophisticated equipment needs another year's trials.

"A comparison of the Type 42 and 45 is incredible – it proves Daring is a new generation.

"The capability each one of these Type 45s will deliver is something quite exceptional and I look forward to them joining the Fleet as quickly as they possibly can. We've paid a lot of money for these ships – which is probably why we didn't get the original 12 – but in terms of capability they are world-beaters."

As for smaller ships, there is a decision to be made in the next year or so on the Mine Countermeasures Vessels.

Developments in technology, including remotely controlled unmanned vehicles which can be operated from a variety of platforms, offer alternatives to the traditional minehunters.

"In the future there's lots of remotely controlled capability out there that could probably deliver some or all of the effect we currently get from our 16 MCMVs – but do we want to lose them as a growing path for our officers, COs and crews?" the admiral said.

"It's a decision with far-reaching consequences and needs to be looked at carefully. We must not forget the wider role for these platforms in maritime security operations and presence."

While the admiral was away with NATO, his Navy was trialling 'sea swap' – an initiative to extend a ship's time at sea by rotating entire ship's company.

Destroyers Edinburgh and Exeter tested the scheme in the South Atlantic. Sandown-class

minehunters – and now Hunts too – rotate crews in the Gulf.

"Sea swap in Edinburgh and Exeter was an experiment," said Admiral Stanhope.

"We did what we wanted to do, we analysed the results and we'll use them in future for Project Fisher, which is all about delivering capability through the manning of our ships differently in future. It was nevertheless a very useful trial."

He continued: "I think the reason it works for MCMVs is that they're smaller and the ship's name identity isn't as important – you could put a ship's company of 40 people in this room and they'd identify and soon know each other well."

"Their community is bonded as a 40-man team and their ethos is not simply built around the ship's name. Labelling is important but you could call them 'Portsmouth MCMV Group 1' for instance and they would still have a team identity to define them."

On Exeter and Edinburgh, 'sea swap' did not prove as successful – but it did offer many valuable lessons and ideas.

"If you scale it up it doesn't work the same way – a ship's company of 200 people takes longer to bond," Admiral Stanhope explained.

"One of the ideas of Project Fisher is to have modules of capability and form your bonding around each and every module. Divisions bond quite well so that could be a good structure to work around – I don't know the answer to that yet, but it's one of the things Fisher is looking at."

"But however we change the way we deliver our manning, the important baseline is: can we still fight and win? Whatever we do has got to be able to pass that test."

It is a fundamental question.

One of the criticisms levelled at the Navy, particularly after the Cornwall incident, is that it has lost some of its fighting edge over the last few years.

"The moral component, which includes such things as courage, commitment and the ability to fight and win, is very important, and one of the consequences of the Cornwall incident was to reinvigorate our thinking on this. The moral component is a difficult and complex thing to analyse, although easy to recognise."

"You can't bottle it and dish it out to every new recruit; it's a mixture of everything from the ethos of being in the service, to pride in the uniform you wear, to team work and leadership."

"It's a mixture of training, confidence, and capabilities, and we have to be sure that we're clear about how we're delivering and institutionalise it."

On the very morning before our interview, the Commander-in-Chief Fleet had spent two and a half hours going through the 'lessons learned' package from the Cornwall incident, making sure all the actions had been completed, or

at least were in hand. He added:

"Nobody wanted a Cornwall incident. It happened, and as a consequence, I'm confident as Commander-in-Chief that we're very much better prepared and trained than if it hadn't happened. It was a wake-up call."

"Some of the issues raised are more challenging to solve than others, especially the equipment issues. But what we must make sure of is that these changes are embedded in the way we do our business, not just boxes ticked so we can say: 'Oh yes, we've dealt with that now and move on.'"

The Fulton report into the Cornwall incident – which was not made fully public for operational reasons – made a number of important recommendations including improved training for boarding parties.

There is a new two-week individual course at HMS Raleigh, followed by collective training, team training and the FOST testing. The admiral has already visited the course.

FOST itself has changed, partly as a result of the post-Cornwall recommendations – as any ship's company who has passed through the organisation in the last year will readily testify.

"FOST has always been tough but it's become more focused on particular operational needs – there is directed, focused, training as well as generic training," said Admiral Stanhope.

"And we've taken away one of the assessment criteria – one of the 'just satisfactory'. Now you're either satisfactory or unsatisfactory."

"What did 'just sat' mean? It meant you were not yet ready to go and do the business I was directing you to do."

"We agreed last year this was inappropriate – ships are either good enough or not good enough. You can't just slip under the bar, you've got to get over it. It's put an edge into the pass/fail criteria which didn't exist before."

If the Cornwall incident raised doubts in the media about the moral fibre of today's RN, more recent events have prompted questions about the Navy's role given the growing piracy threat.

National newspapers reported that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office had told the Senior Service not to take any action against pirates – for legal and human rights reasons.

Not so, said the Admiral.

"It's not a question of whether we have the capability. I know we have, and as a sailor, I'd like to get in there and give my COs all the freedom they need to sort these bad boys out," he said, echoing the sentiments of HMS Somerset's

ship's company (see pages 25-28).

"But it's not as simple as that. It is a very complex issue and raises all sorts of legal implications and debate. Every nation is challenged with the legal aspects of taking pirates in other peoples' and international waters, the jurisdiction and who is responsible for the ultimate legal process."

He explained: "Responsibility for dealing with the captives rests with the state which owns the warship which seized them. You have to bring them home and whether our own legal system can deal with them is an issue in itself. Legally it's a very difficult issue."

It is and until the nations of the world resolve the complex problem, the admiral believes "the incidence will get worse."

Piracy is an historic problem the Royal Navy has grappled with in the past.

As ever it adapts and changes to meet new demands and challenges.

If the Commander-in-Chief Fleet had been born in 1982 instead of 1952, does he feel that he would have had the same opportunities?

"It would have been a different career. The Navy has moved on but I'm sure I could enjoy similar opportunities," Admiral Stanhope said.

"The core values remain the same. If you're a good leader, professional at your job, innovative, if you're ready for change, if you're tough and resilient in character then you will make your way through and achieve what you want."

He added: "There's a bit of luck, a bit of being in the right place at the right time, but life's like that. As long as you've got all those things in abundance you'll be up there with the front runners."

But will the UK still have a Navy in 30 years' time?

"Of course we will still have a Navy."

"I am sure of two things. One is that the world is changing and I haven't got a clue what it is going to be like."

"And the other is that there will be a maritime component to our country's security."

He explained: "If we want to position the UK on the world stage as a nation to be listened to – a nation which has an effect, bearing in mind that our wealth comes more from investment and trade abroad rather than homegrown, then we have to have a way of influencing that."

"The Navy will form a part of that ability to influence, either in protection of the masses of trade which comes in or providing the basis of border security – in whatever other ways the world changes, we are an island nation."

● HMS Cornwall's sea boat conducts enhanced patrols off the Khawr al Amaya oil terminal in the wake of the hostage incident

Picture: LA(Phot) Jannine Hartmann, FRPU East

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"We agreed last year this was inappropriate – ships are either good enough or not good enough. You can't just slip under the bar, you've got to get over it. It's put an edge into the pass/fail criteria which didn't exist before."

If the Cornwall incident raised doubts in the media about the moral fibre of today's RN, more recent events have prompted questions about the Navy's role given the growing piracy threat.

National newspapers reported that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office had told the Senior Service not to take any action against pirates – for legal and human rights reasons.

Not so, said the Admiral.

"It's not a question of whether we have the capability. I know we have, and as a sailor, I'd like to get in there and give my COs all the freedom they need to sort these bad boys out," he said, echoing the sentiments of HMS Somerset's

ship's company (see pages 25-28).

"But it's not as simple as that. It is a very complex issue and raises all sorts of legal implications and debate. Every nation is challenged with the legal aspects of taking pirates in other peoples' and international waters, the jurisdiction and who is responsible for the ultimate legal process."

He explained: "Responsibility for dealing with the captives rests with the state which owns the warship which seized them. You have to bring them home and whether our own legal system can deal with them is an issue in itself. Legally it's a very difficult issue."

It is and until the nations of the world resolve the complex problem, the admiral believes "the incidence will get worse."

Piracy is an historic problem the Royal Navy has grappled with in the past.

As ever it adapts and changes to meet new demands and challenges.

If the Commander-in-Chief Fleet had been born in 1982 instead of 1952, does he feel that he would have had the same opportunities?

"It would have been a different career. The Navy has moved on but I'm sure I could enjoy similar opportunities," Admiral Stanhope said.

"The core values remain the same. If you're a good leader, professional at your job, innovative, if you're ready for change, if you're tough and resilient in character then you will make your way through and achieve what you want."

● HMS Cornwall's sea boat conducts enhanced patrols off the Khawr al Amaya oil terminal in the wake of the hostage incident

Picture: LA(Phot) Jannine Hartmann, FRPU East

There is a new two-week individual course at HMS Raleigh, followed by collective training, team training and the FOST testing. The admiral has already visited the course.

FOST itself has changed, partly as a result of the post-Cornwall recommendations – as any ship's company who has passed through the organisation in the last year will readily testify.

"FOST has always been tough but it's become more focused on particular operational needs – there is directed, focused, training as well as generic training," said Admiral Stanhope.

"And we've taken away one of the assessment criteria – one of the 'just satisfactory'. Now you're either satisfactory or unsatisfactory."

Dauntless gears up

HMS Daring isn't the only new destroyer making waves this month (see pages 20-21).

Her younger sister HMS Dauntless is rapidly approaching her date with destiny: heading out to sea for the first time.

The Type 45 warship is in the latter stages of fitting out at BAE's Scotstoun yard (she received her main gun last month and harbour trials are imminent).

The computers in her operations room have been fired up, the propeller shafts have turned under the ship's power, and the galley, laundry and messes are almost finished.

And while Dauntless grows, so too does her ship's company (now 29 strong) and her list of affiliates.

The destroyer picked up where HMS Newcastle left off, bonding herself with the great Tyne city.

"It's exactly a year since the first of the ship's company arrived in Glasgow," said Cdr Julian Hill, Dauntless' Senior Naval Officer.

"The building of the ship is progressing well and strong ties have been established with our key affiliations in the Newcastle and elsewhere in the UK."

Indeed, many of the affiliates Dauntless enjoys are identical to those fostered by the Geordie Gunboat.

Percy Hedley School for youngsters with special needs received a visit from ten members of the ship's company, who challenged the pupils to a game of wheelchair football. The sailors received a 6-0 drubbing.

Success hasn't been overly evident at St James' Park, home of Newcastle United Football Club, this season.

But that didn't stop the Magpies offering a warm welcome to the Dauntless team, who treated the sailors to a tour of the imposing stadium, assisted by Newcastle United legend Peter Beardsley.

There's now a ship's badge hanging up somewhere in the stadium as a reminder of the visit.

The men and women of Dauntless return to Newcastle this month for their first official reception by civic leaders. It's not all wining and dining, however.

Two dozen sailors will grapple with cleaning up one of Newcastle's inner city parks.

Visits in triplicate

NOT too many of Her Majesty's Ships can squeeze up the Manchester Ship Canal.

Certainly the city's own destroyer can't (not without losing some of her mast, at any rate).

Minehunter HMS Middleton can... and did.

She cannot, however, navigate the canals and waterways of Greater Manchester.

So Salford Quays was about as close as the Hunt-class warship could get to the town for which she is named, Middleton, near Rochdale.

And as berths in the middle of an industrial metropolis go, it's really quite nice: the Lowry museum, a celebration of Salford's most famous artistic son, is just a stone's throw away.

Not that the ship's company had too much time for admiring paintings in a busy four-day programme.

It began with that tricky – and lengthy – passage of the ship canal (it takes at least six hours to get to Salford Quays from open water), a passage enjoyed by a string of North West dignitaries: the Lord Mayor and Mayoress of Manchester, the Mayor and Mayoress of Salford, Wirral and Rochdale, and the High Sheriff and Lord Lieutenant of Merseyside.

There were more dignitaries to host once alongside in Salford: the ship's company staged an official reception for VIPs and affiliates, and gave Middleton and Chadderton Sea Cadet a guided tour of their vessel.

The youngsters weren't the only tourists to wander around the minehunter as Middleton staged a 'ship open the visitors' afternoon.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the Pennines... HMS Grimsby was reaffirming links with the eponymous port.

Thanks to a run-in with the side of a fjord in Norway (Grimsby came off worse...), visits to the famous fishing town have been fairly infrequent in recent years.

The ship's company have nevertheless maintained ties with Lincolnshire and over five days last month, they cemented those bonds.

Local councillors invited the sailors to the town hall, and Grimsby's ship's company could also be found visiting St Andrew's

Because it's there...



AS YOU read these words, four Royal Navy climbers should stand atop one of the world's most imposing mountains.

Surg Lt Lara Herbert (pictured above), Lt Cdr Tom Boecks and Royal Marines Majors Matt Skuse and Maj Molly Macpherson (plus his – toy – duck) should have raised the White Ensign on the summit of Makalu in the Himalayas.

The quartet were in the lead party for the assault on the 8,462m summit (that's 27,762ft or 5 1/2 miles above sea level) as the 50th anniversary expedition by Britain's Armed Forces reached its climax.

Although it's a tri-Service celebration of military mountaineering, the Royal Navy and Royal Marines represent almost half of the main team on the slopes of Makalu.

The sailors are gearing up for a six to eight-month stint in the Gulf on the Aintree deployment (see pages 14-15) where they will take over one of two Sandown-class warships, Blyth and Ramsey; Grimsby herself will remain in Faslane, where she'll be crewed by comrades returning home.

A short hop along the east coast, and frigate HMS Iron Duke could be found in her affiliated city.

It's been four years since the people of Kingston-upon-Hull last saw the distinctive outline of the Type 23 warship.

So the Tykes welcomed the sailors with open arms.

The highlight of Iron Duke's three-day spell on the Humber was a civic reception in Hull's impressive Guild Hall at the request of the city's Lord Mayor Cllr Brenda Petch.

There were activities for the 180-strong ship's company from the moment the frigate came alongside, from an official reception on arrival to a naval careers forum for local advisers.

A team from the ship grappled with tidying up and painting a children's play area in Barnsley Street.

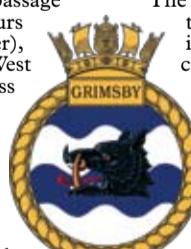
And a sizeable number of the ship's company were on hand for an open day. In six hours, 1,500 locals filed aboard Iron Duke to enjoy a tour and chat with her sailors.

"The reception we have had throughout our visit has been fantastic – to have so many visitors was really impressive," said Iron Duke's CO Cdr Mark Newland.

"The people of Hull showed a real enthusiasm for the Royal Navy and we thank them for their interest."

"Particularly for my ship's company that come from Hull – and I have five or six – this was a really special weekend for us."

Having completed Operational Sea Training, Iron Duke is now undergoing a brief spell of maintenance at home in Portsmouth before heading across the North Atlantic to spend six months in and around the Caribbean on hurricane relief and anti-drug running duties.



Arrows aim for Meet Your Navy

THE Red Arrows will pirouette through the skies on July 25, the opening day of Meet Your Navy in Portsmouth – the 21st-Century successor to Navy Days.

We cannot, of course, allow the RAF to dominate a naval event, so the Fleet Air Arm past and present are also lined up for aerial displays.

The RN Historic Flight – the naval counterpart of the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight – will be performing on all three days of the show, as will present-day FAA helicopters.

From those helicopters, Royal Marines will 'rapid rope' – sliding down a, er, rope, er, rapidly – on to a suspicious vessel in Portsmouth Harbour to rescue a damsel in distress.

For those of you who prefer a rather more measured pace of life, Brazilian naval cadets will be bringing their magnificent tall ship Cisne Branco for the duration of Meet Your Navy.

The RN will be the largest single presence at the event, although the ships themselves are subject to change.

One RN presence is confirmed, however: the singing PTI.

By day LPT Jay Picton provides fitness advice and coaching to military personnel at Fort Blockhouse in Gosport.

In the evening and weekends, the club swinger is a (night)club swinger, performing self-penned songs at venues around the UK.

The 24-year-old has already topped an independent chart with his debut three-track demo.

Jay will be on stage for around 30 minutes each day, hopefully performing on his former ship HMS Gloucester.

Further details about the event are available from www.meetyournavy.co.uk. Tickets are available from the website or by calling 0871 230 5582.

An RAF-led team was the first to the top.

Flt Lt Jonathon Percival stood on the summit at 5.30pm on May 4 and unfurled the roundel.

His success was the first on the mountain this season and as such earns huge kudos for him and his Sherpa, Dawa.

But we don't want to dwell too long on an RAF triumph...

And anyway, long before there was a Crab atop Makalu, there was a Royal Marine.

Green beret reservist Al Hinkes scaled the mountain in his successful quest to climb all 14 peaks above 8,000m.

Al was the first Brit to stand on the top of Makalu – and shared his expertise with the 2008 climbers.

He's one of fewer than 250 mountaineers to scale Makalu since 1970 (more climbers reach the summit of Everest *every year*, which gives you an idea of how

tricky a mountain it is).

Like everything in the military, the teeth needs a tail, in this case a base camp at 5,600m (18,300ft, a 'mere' 3 1/2 miles above sea level).

Beyond ensuring the climbers have all they need, the base camp team is their link with the wider world.

"Running the website has been interesting work but a challenge," explained base camper Lt Cdr Richard Walters.

"Communications equipment is not designed to work at this altitude

and we have been surviving by the seat of our pants.

"So far we have broken two cameras, two head cams, a solar panel and a hard drive.

"It has been a minor miracle that we have been able to keep things going but the support from home has been excellent."

If the climbers succeed they will be among the first ten British climbers to beat Makalu.

You can read more about the expedition at www.makalu2008.org

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Last of the Corporate warriors

OF THE impressive task force which sailed south 26 years ago to liberate the Falklands, only one continues to fly the White Ensign.

And despite enjoying the autumn of her life, there's no let-up in the programme for HMS Exeter which remains as active today as she was during Operation Corporate.

After a lightning deployment to the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, the Type 42 destroyer returned home to Portsmouth briefly before scurrying off once more.

This time she was in UK waters, however, training Royal Navy Reservists in the art of force protection using Exeter's Minigun and GPMGs, before the destroyer was thrust into challenging scenarios courtesy of the team at FOST.

Suitably imbued with the art of war, Exeter has now embarked on a tour of the UK with a number of high-profile visits.

First up is the capital, where the destroyer is hosting the launch of a new 007 novel.

Best-selling author Sebastian Faulks was picked by Ian Fleming's family to pick up where the Bond creator left off. The result is *Devil May Care*, being unveiled aboard Exeter. Bond, fittingly, 'served' in Exeter in his seagoing days.

The ship's company will be paying dues to the Constable of the Tower of London in an historic ceremony, handing over a barrel of rum.

From London, Exeter heads for Barrow for the town's Festival of the Sea, Leith and Newcastle, and on passage between the ports, the destroyer will be flexing her muscles conducting gunnery training.

Then it's across the North Sea to

Norway, into the Atlantic to Iceland and finally to Severomorsk near Murmansk for Russian Navy Days.

Two of the ship's nine battle honours were earned by the present Exeter – Falklands and Kuwait.

But it is probably her predecessor which is the most famous of the five ships to bear the name of Devon's county town (it also bears Exeter's motto, *semper fidelis* – always faithful).

The 1929 heavy cruiser saw action a decade later, leading the charge against the Graf Spee at the River Plate, for which she was severely damaged – but not before inflicting sufficient injury upon the 'pocket battleship' that she scuttled herself off Montevideo.

Her good fortune ran out two years later in the Java Sea when she succumbed to Japanese cruisers.

Before that you must go back two centuries to find the previous three Exeters.

The illustrious line began in the late 17th Century with a 70-gun third rate which saw action against the French before being ravaged by an explosion in 1691 which eventually led to her being broken up.

The second Exeter was a 60-gun fourth rate, built in 1697, which served the Royal Navy in the Mediterranean and in North America, including Quiberon Bay. She was finally laid up in 1763...

... which is the same year that Exeter III, a 64-gun third rate, arrived on the scene.

She saw frequent action in and around the Indian Sub-Continent, earning the ship's first four battle honours in a single year, 1782. The fighting took its toll, however; two years later she was burned as unserviceable.

Picture: LA(Phot) Billy Bunting



Sadras	1782
Providien	1782
Negapatam	1782
Trincomalee	1782
River Plate	1939
Malaya	1942
Sunda Strait	1942
Falkland Islands	1982
Kuwait	1991

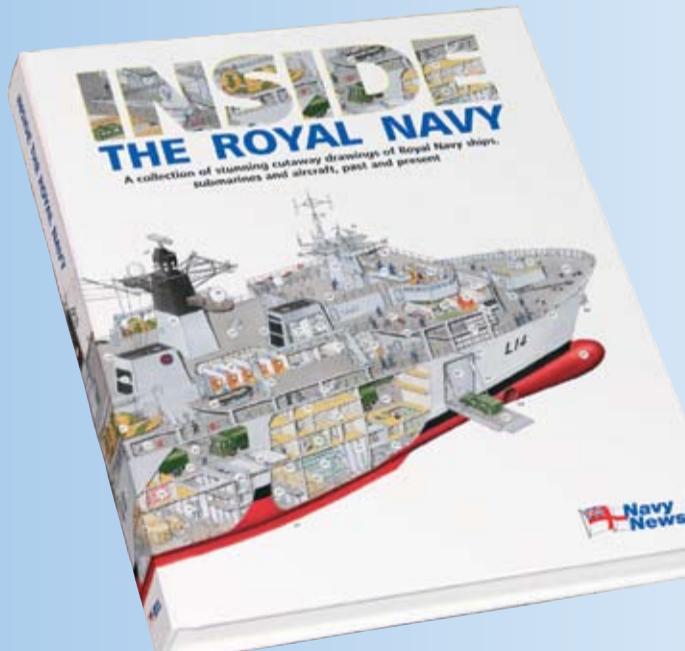
Facts and figures

Class: Type 42 (batch 2) destroyer
 Pennant number: D89
 Builder: Swan Hunter, Wallsend
 Laid down: July 22, 1976
 Launched: April 25, 1978
 Commissioned: September 19, 1980
 Displacement: 4,500 tons
 Length: 125 metres (412ft)
 Beam: 14.3 metres (47ft)
 Draught: 5.8 metres (19ft)
 Speed: 29 knots
 Complement: 287
 Propulsion: COGOG: two RR Olympus TM3B gas turbines; two RR Tyne RM1C gas turbines; two shafts
 Armament: Twin Sea Dart missile launcher; 4.5 inch Mk 8 gun; two 20mm close range guns; two Phalanx; Seagnat and decoy launchers
 Helicopter: Lynx



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HEROES OF THE ROYAL NAVY No.50

Capt Lewis Halliday RM VC

IN THE sweltering heat of a humid late spring day, the Royal Marines Light Infantrymen of HMS Orlando filed along the platform of Machiupu railway station just outside Peking.

They marched through the gates of the Chinese capital, through bustling, jostling crowds of seething, broiling locals.

For Peking's small British community, the marines' arrival could not come too soon.

The capital was all but in the grip of a strange phenomenon, as swift in its growth as it was violent: the Boxer movement.

The Boxers – actually the Society of Right and Harmonious Fists – captured the Zeitgeist of China on the cusp of the new century.

They sprang from northern China, growing from the peasant population. They railed against the baleful foreign influence in the land of the dragon. They attacked all foreigners, all Christians – Chinese converts or Westerners – all imperialists.

The Boxers had no leaders. They did have the tacit support of the Dowager Empress, who openly supported this wave of anti-foreign feeling.

In the final spring of the 19th Century, that Boxer wave reached the capital of China – and the foreigners feared for their lives, even the stoical British Ambassador Sir Claude Macdonald, a former Army officer and possessor of a magnificent moustache.

Fearful of the Boxers, and convinced Chinese imperial troops would do nothing to protect British citizens, Macdonald signaled the senior naval officer in the Far East, Sir Edward Seymour, for help.

And so it was that men of the Royal Marines Light Infantry arrived in Peking on the last day of May 1900, charged with defending the British Embassy and its environs.

Most of the foreign legations were clustered in Peking's diplomatic quarter, now hastily turned into a makeshift fortress and bastion for Europeans and Japanese.

The arrival of Capt Lewis Halliday and his fellow marines was timely: by mid June, the Chinese capital was a broiling sea of Boxers, bolstered by Imperial troops who had now formally declared war on the Western Powers.

They quickly turned their attention to storming the British legation. On June 24, they forced their way through the west wall of the compound, torched some stable buildings, and began to fight their way through the rest.

Macdonald determined this would not stand. Two Marine officers, Captains Strouts and

Halliday, led a detachment of Royal Marines to drive the Boxers back.

Accounts of what happened next vary: two things are indisputable, however. Halliday led his men down a narrow alley – and there he ran headlong into five armed Boxers.

In the ensuing struggle, four Chinese fell to bullets from Halliday's pistol and the fifth fled.

The Marine officer was struck at point-blank range by a rifle shot, which shattered his left shoulder bone and carried away part of one lung.

Gravely wounded, Halliday urged his men on. He did not seek help from them but made his own way back to the legation sickbay, while Strouts kept the pressure on the Boxers; he would pay for doing so with his life.

Lewis Halliday was gazetted on the first day of the new century, but he always played down his role in the action, believing his fellow officer more deserving of Britain's highest honour. He also received the Third China War Medal plus 'Defence of the Legations' clasp (below).

The besieged Westerners Halliday protected were liberated that August when an international relief force fought their way into Peking.



STARE east from here and you will not see land again until the waves of the Pacific crash against the western shores of Chile.

WO Andy Pilbury, HMS Endurance's Executive Warrant Officer, pauses for a moment of reflection at Bertha's Beach on East Falkland (which lies at latitude 51° 55'S).

Normally the beach is awash with penguins – but by the beginning of the austral winter, they have migrated, hence this rather desolate scene. Not so

Endurance. She, for once, is remaining in southern waters for the duration.

The Antarctic patrol and survey ship

completed her work around the frozen continent and headed to the Falklands for maintenance before she sails for the warmer waters of South and West Africa.

Before bidding farewell to the ice, the Red Plum hosted the team who value the data the ship collects above all others: the UK Hydrographic Office.

The chief executive of the organisation, Mike Robinson, and the UK National Hydrographer, Rear Admiral Ian Moncrieff – one of Endurance's former commanding officers – joined the ship to see the problems and challenges of surveying in this inhospitable region.

Seven out of ten mariners use Admiralty charts

to guide them safely around the Seven Seas – and the waters of Antarctica are no exception.

Around 45,000 'eco tourists' now visit the icy wastes each year – but the hazards of their journeys south were underlined only last year when the cruise ship MV Explorer fell victim to an iceberg.

"Antarctica is poorly charted to modern nautical standards, yet it is becoming an increasingly popular place with tourist ships," said Admiral Moncrieff.

"The survey work being carried out by Endurance, amongst others from other nations, is playing a crucial role in reducing risks and

improving the safe conduct of navigation."

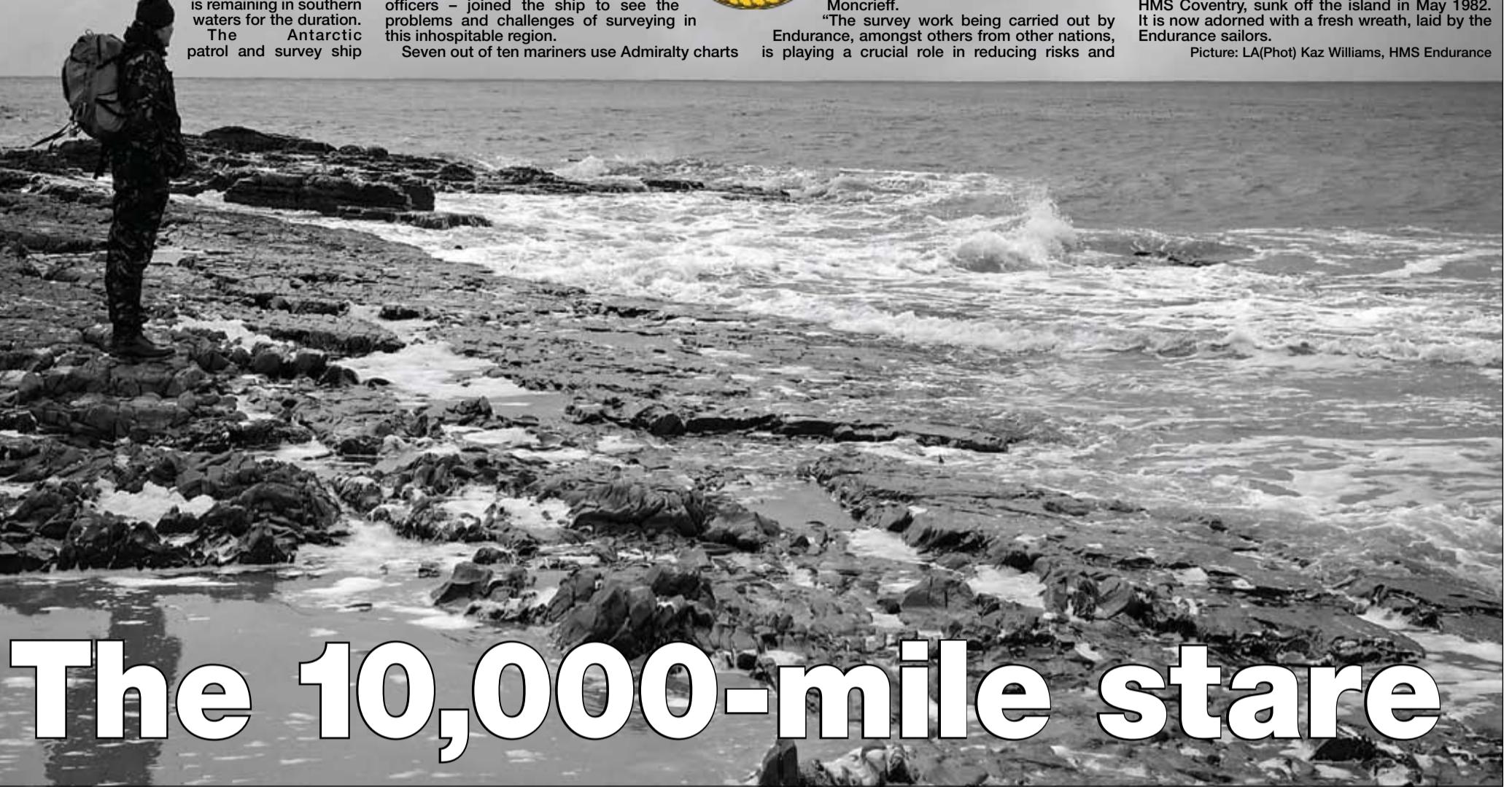
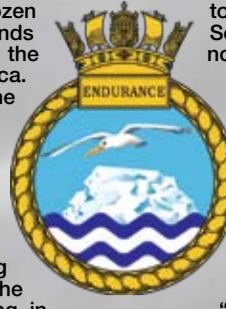
He added: "It also provides data in support of Antarctic science. The key issue is getting this data into charts as quickly as we can – a task likely to take many years."

The admiral departed the Red Plum with a clutch of material which he'll use in a presentation at the Antarctic Treaty Convention later this year.

As for the Red Plum, her period alongside at Mare Harbour allowed the ship's company to spread their wings around the Falklands.

Several headed to Pebble Island, in the north of the archipelago, and the memorial to the men of HMS Coventry, sunk off the island in May 1982. It is now adorned with a fresh wreath, laid by the Endurance sailors.

Picture: LA(Phot) Kaz Williams, HMS Endurance



The 10,000-mile stare

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The courtyard garden at Admiralty Quarter





● Seafox is lowered into the waters of the Northern Arabian Gulf with the USNS Catawba in the background



● (Above) Remus is lowered into the water; and a sonar picture of a wreck located in the shallow waters of the Mine Danger Area along the Khawr Abd Allah waterway



Burning the midnight oil

AGAINST the hazy backdrop of the Gulf heat, the massive oil tankers loom over the Iraqi oil terminal, siphoning away the currency of commerce, transport and production.

It is the safe arrival of these tankers to which the Naval ships of the Coalition have been dedicating themselves in recent weeks.

The ships of the US and Royal Navy have been joined by craft and divers from Iraq, Kuwait, Britain and America – in total 22 Coalition vessels and some 640 personnel.

The waters of the Northern Arabian Gulf are scattered with the detritus of the conflicts of recent decades, its waters scarred on the mariner's chart by the thick purple line that denotes Mine Danger Area.

But those charts will soon need to be redrawn with the new designation Former Mined Area.

Their work shows there is nothing to imperil the massive tankers on their ponderous route to those all-important oil platforms, nothing to deter the commercial companies of the world heading up to pipe away the financial lifeline to the rebuilding of the Iraqi nation.

For this is the job that the Coalition task force CTF 158.2, led by Cdr David Hunkin RN and Cdr Scott Evertson of the US Navy, has been dedicating itself since the closing days of March.

At the invitation of the Iraqi and Kuwaiti governments, painstakingly slowly, in a labour of detailed concentration, the various nations have checked, checked and checked again the seabeds of the Mine Danger Areas (MDAs), searching for the forgotten relics of past conflicts.

Cdr Hunkin, the British officer at the head of the international mine countermeasures force, said: "At the start of our mission there were 12 mine danger areas for us to visit."

In total, that meant 104nm² of seabed, an area almost the size of the Isle of Wight; 2,640nm travelled at a speed of one knot; over 2,000 contacts discovered littering the seabed; all in six short weeks.

And the tight schedule? "Temperature and the season was a key driver to get up and get it done now. Temperature does affect the endurance of our equipment and our people."

"That's also why we had this amount of assets thrown at it to generate pace," said Cdr Hunkin.

"And there is no one single solution to any MCM problem, you want that variety of techniques."

The work has been led by six minehunting ships: the two British

It's been an intensive stint in the Northern Arabian Gulf for sailors on board minehunters HM ships Blyth, Ramsey, Chiddingfold, Atherstone, RFA Diligence and RN divers on Operation Ardent Remedy. The British sailors have been joined by American, Iraqi and Kuwaiti counterparts during their painstaking mission to declare the seas safe of any dangerous relics of past conflicts, reports Helen Craven.

Hunts and two Sandowns, and two Avenger-class MCMVs from the American fleet, USS Scout and USS Gladiator, supported by RFA Diligence acting as mother-ship for the minehunters and the USNS Catawba for the divers.

It is now five years since the last seeding of mines into the blue waters of the Northern Arabian Gulf, and this passage of time has brought the title historic ordnance disposal.

It may seem surprising that this clearance task has not been done before, but Cdr Hunkin is frank about the reasons – "The key point is up until now we haven't had the technology to go and tackle this very shallow water area."

"If this clearance job was easy, it would have been done in the last 17 years since Desert Storm."

He also credits the close liaison with the Iraqi and Kuwaiti forces that made the work possible.

"That was one of our key concerns. How are we going to liaise with these guys? How are we going to make it work? So we had to come up with protocols. And we found them being completely open and honest, warm and friendly."

Iraqi and Kuwaiti officers and ratings worked alongside the British and Americans to make sure that the operation ran smoothly for all the nations involved.

Cdr Evertson added: "We made sure that it wasn't a case of 'I'm diving my own stuff'."

"We're not four separate entities out here, the good thing about it is that we are all working together."

"A lot of the divers out here have been trained at either our or the US diving school, so we all speak the same language, so to speak, similar protocols too," continued Cdr Hunkin.

"It has been challenging, that's for sure. It is a difficult nut to crack."

The two British Hunts, HMS Atherstone and Chiddingfold, arrived in the Gulf in April, bringing with them their impressive 2193 Sonar and the agile Seafox remote vehicle.

It's the arrival of these and Remus, the autonomous underwater vehicle, that have made possible the detailed and intricate search of these challenging waters: deep and shallow; crystal clear and mud shrouded; solid sand seabed and glutinous mud fields.

Sonars, cameras and hands have

searched these waters, spotting and identifying contacts as small as 18-inch metal boxes that are scattered across the seabed.

The British vessels – smaller with a shallower draft – tended to focus on the waters of less than ten metres in depth, where the Hunts' 2193 Sonar and the remote underwater vehicle Remus particularly came into their own.

Cdr Hunkin said: "The Khawr Abd Allah (KAA) waterway is for us a particularly challenging environment. The water itself is brackish, so it's half salt, half fresh.

"The charting of this area is fairly difficult, it is constrained navigationally, and also the water conditions make it very difficult for our sonar to operate.

"So there were some difficult environmental challenges for us in taking our ships up there.

"The waters are very silt and sediment-laden, and underwater there is absolutely nil visibility.

"The fact that we've done this job quickly doesn't mean that it was easy, just that we've worked hard."

He added: "This was the first time that the 2193 had been used in the Gulf and the first time in such shallow and demanding waters as the KAA, and the results we got were absolutely outstanding.

"The central MDA was our shallowest, a lot of the water was between three and six metres and too shallow for a minehunter, we were using Remus.

"The information from her sonar is almost a map of the seabed, then divers went out and dived on the contacts.

"The equipment performance was much better than expected, we had no idea how some of the sonars were going to work, but we were delighted with the results."

A team of divers from the Fleet Diving Squadron and experts from the Fleet Underwater Unmanned Vehicle (UUV) unit have been custodians of Remus, a yard-long bundle of clever technology wrapped up in a cheerful yellow case.

This autonomous vehicle, once dropped from a seaboat, contentedly trundles between transponder buoys at a distance of up to 2,000 yards, gathering up a detailed picture of the seabed over which it travels.

Its sophisticated technology has

cut jobs that would have taken 20 days down to just four.

The four-man team – CPO(D) 'Bomber' Brown, PO(MW) 'Fingers' Dumbleton, LD Michael Jacobs and CPO 'Sniper' Gelder – have been moving among the various vessels that have made up the coalition task force.

"This is our fifth platform," said CPO Brown, "as a four-man team, we've kept a low footprint, moving from platform to platform.

"We've spotted 1,282 contacts – all non mine. Lots of scrap metal, lots of tyres and general junk."

"I'm confident that seabed is as cleared as it can be."

Remus – to give it its full title Remote Environmental Monitoring Underwater System – has proven itself in the far ranges of Norwegian cold and West African sun – although despite its five years of use by the RN, it has not yet achieved operational status.

Once spotted, it remains the job of the Naval divers – whether British, American, Iraqi or Kuwaiti – to investigate any suspect contact and decide its nature, often by touch alone in the murk-ridden water.

The divers from the Fleet Diving Squadron have been based on board the USNS Catawba, an ocean-going tug that has spent the last 13 years operating out of Bahrain. Although this expansive craft belies the title tug with its equally expansive master, Capt Rodger LaGrone of Military Sealift Fleet Support Command.

Within the Sandown HMS Ramsey, the ship's dive team are impressed with what Remus had to offer. PO Garth Spence said: "For diving in shallow water, it's ideal. It brings back a latitude and longitude, and the diver can spot dive from a boat on that position.

"And for deeper work, it's a lot less hassle, and prevents repetitive dives for the divers and the issues of being bound by compression rules.

"This new Remus really draws together the minewarfare and diver branches. The CPO (Minewarfare) and PO Diver sit down together, look at the shapes and sizes that Remus has picked up, and make decisions together.

"This was a massive success for us as a team. It was a long hard task, but Remus in my eyes really simplified the diving."

Pictures: LA(Phot) Chris Winter



● (Front to back) HMS Atherstone, HMS Blyth and HMS Ramsey conduct mine clearance in the Khawr Abd Allah waterway

"The original recce was quite complex, as we had to search the seabeds with lots of wreckage."

"But this really proved our purpose, how flexible we are. This was not a run-of-the-mill task for a minehunter, we adapted the equipment we have on board – with the help of Remus."

"We were lucky to have the opportunity."

On board the British minehunter HMS Chiddingfold, Lt Allan Nekreus sings the praises of the Seafox mine disposal system and the 2193 sonar: "It's a very advanced and capable system – worldbeating technology."

"It's a huge leap forward, and really effective in this environment. It's outperformed our expectations."

Chiddingfold is the first Hunt to reap the benefits of Seafox, which is in the process of being rolled out to the rest of the MCM fleet.

As a RCMDs (remote controlled mine disposal system), Seafox is a somewhat smaller beast than the bulky yellow submarines that have been a long familiar sight on the back of Naval MCMVs.

The svelte orange cigar is linked by a fibreoptic cable back to the ops room inside its mother-ship from where it is controlled by a console akin to an old-fashioned arcade machine, but with a grainier black and white screen and less intuitive controls.

Since arriving in the Gulf in late February, Chiddingfold has uncovered some 363 contacts scattered on the seabed, and dived on 30 of them.

Somewhat surprising to a British mind that knows the monthly regularity with which the ordnance of World Wars 1 and 2 are dragged up from the Channel, this search has uncovered not a single mine.

"So far with the coverage we've given, we've found around 2,000 sonar contacts, but thus far we haven't found any ordnance at all within those areas," said Cdr Hunkin. "It's mostly been debris from merchant ships and general debris."

There is a note of caution, that any mariner who knows the British coast will not be surprised to hear, "At the end of the day – with the vagaries of minewarfare and operating in the sea – when

mines are placed in the water you can never give a 100 per cent guarantee that there is no ordnance left on the seabed.

"However the amount of kit that we've had allowed us to do a very thorough job."

"I can stand up in front of the admiral, with my hand on my heart, and say this job is done to the best it can be."

Once the American admiral signs off the work, then the chartmakers will take up their pens.

Strike out Mine Danger Area and replace it with Former Mined Area – and commercial shippers will take note, those wary of the risk of an increased insurance premium will have greater confidence in sending their valuable leviathans into the NAG to carry away the precious black gold.

And what next for the British minehunters as their traditional quarry of the MDA are struck off the charts of the Northern Gulf?

Cdr Hunkin states: "Back into their tasking in the region. We work very closely, hand in glove, with our American colleagues."

"So we go back into our routine activity of route maintenance and conducting exercises."

For the last stages of Operation Ardent Remedy, RFA Diligence has hosted the MCM battlestaff, cheerfully referred to onboard as "the people with disruptive patterns on their uniform".

The professional mariners of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary are perhaps the closest to understanding the business that drives the commercial tankers around the globe.

Capt Tony McNally RFA, commanding officer of RFA Diligence, said: "We do view things slightly differently. We can actually see the benefits because we can see the reasons behind the marine insurance."

"If you are asking a company to move a multi-million pound tanker with a multi-multi-million pound cargo through a mine danger area, obviously the people who have to insure that risk want higher premiums."

"If we can prove that there is no risk in this area, the insurance premiums come down and that attracts more trade."

"Most mariners are quite simple people. We do believe what we see, especially on a chart. When we use

charts, we take it as a fact, because you risk the safety of the ship on that information."

"If a chart says Mine Danger Area, people would naturally avoid it if they could. It's not a risk you would want to take."

"However looking at it from the RFA side, where we're working with the minesweeping squadrons here, we get the expert advice from them on what actually is down there."

"The work they're doing gives me great confidence that if they come and tell me there's nothing there, I am 99.9 per cent certain that's going to be clear."

"There's always going to be that small chance that there's something that's buried so far under the sand that it hasn't been found, but that's a very very small chance."

"But when that comes on to the chart that it's a Former Mined Area, it's a huge weight off any master's mind."

A point echoed by the Navy's Cdr Duncan Potts, coalition commander of Combined Task Force 158, charged with safeguarding Iraq's oil platforms: "One of the key things that I wanted to achieve up here – and this is a progressive campaign we're working on – is to establish what I call the normalisation of maritime activity."

"So therefore all mariners involved in the area, whether they be fishermen through to the deep-draught tanker operators who come up to take the oil away from Iraq, can operate in those waters without any fear."

"I see the Al Faw peninsula, and in particular the KAA waterway, as the 'umbilical cord' for the future of Iraq, because the main port for bringing any form of bulk cargo is there, and the territorial waters are where the vast majority of Iraqi oil is exported – roughly in the order of 85 per cent of the country's GDP is generated through their territorial waters."

Lt Chris Flaherty on HMS Blyth summed up the feelings of many of the British matelots labouring off some foreign shore: "I've got a real sense of accomplishment from being out here."

"I'm going to look at the charts once they've been redrawn in years to come, and think 'I did that'."

● Lt Campbell, gunnery officer, on the bridge wing of HMS Chiddingfold giving the order to away dive boat as she does her first mine investigation dive in the Khawr Abd Allah waterway



Hans across the ocean

HALF a century of helping Hans... and Johann and Willi has been celebrated in Plymouth by Anglo-German naval leaders.

For 50 years, the two navies which were mortal enemies for more than four decades have been firm friends, training side-by-side in UK waters.

That bond of friendship was remembered with a day of ceremonies in Devonport and Plymouth, where today's *Deutsche Marine* continues to learn the art of war at sea courtesy of the Flag Officer Sea Training organization.

The training of German warships by the Royal Navy began in 1958 when FGS Gneisenau – the former Hunt-class corvette HMS Oakley – arrived in Portland, the then home of FOST.

Four years later, the Germans sent their home-grown frigate Köln to FOST for her first operational sea training package – the 'MOT' every Royal Navy warship must attain before sailing on a front-line deployment.

Since that day 46 years ago, 185 German warships and 38,000 Matrosen – the German equivalent of matelot – have passed through FOST.

The most recent recipient of the advice and instruction of the FOSTies, frigate FGS Sachsen, held a reception for *Vizeadmiral Hans-Joachim Stricker, Befehlshaber der Flotte* – Germany's Commander-in-Chief Fleet – and senior RN officials.

Music was provided by the *Marinemusikkorps Nordsee*, whose 50 musicians also provided the accompaniment for Plymouth's mayor making ceremony..

On a more solemn note, *Flottilleadmiral Karl-Wilhelm Bollow*, head of Germany's *II Flotille*, laid a wreath at the imposing naval war memorial on Plymouth's Hoe to the hundreds of RN sailors killed in battle with the forerunners of today's German Navy.

Thankfully, those days are long behind us and today's *Deutsche Marine* welcomes the chance to come to FOST.

"They know that the training will be a tremendous challenge for all the crew," explained *Korvettenkapitän Andreas Uhl*, the German liaison officer at FOST; 200 fellow countrymen are in the Plymouth area all year round.

"All German frigates – and in future the new corvettes – have to pass this training before they are sent to any 'real world' operations.

"The sea lanes around Devon and Cornwall provide fantastic training opportunities."

It's not all one-way traffic, however. RN ships benefit from the ships the Germans send to FOST – especially the U-boats and fast patrol craft.

Argyll goes to the races



THE thunder of HMS Argyll's saluting gun announced the start of the world-famous Transat solo yacht race off Plymouth.

Every four years the world's leading yachtsmen and women muster off England's shores and prepare to head out into the North Atlantic.

Several days and 2,800 miles later, they should arrive safely in Boston, Massachusetts.

The race began 48 years ago when the great Sir Francis Chichester clinched the trophy in 40 days, 12 hours and 30 minutes. The next sailor over the line, Royal Marine Lt Col Blondie Hasler (of Cockleshell Heroes fame), didn't finish for another eight days.

Today racers can reach the New World in under 13 days, something current record holder Mike Golding did.

He was aboard the Devonport-based frigate for the start of the race as was solo yachtswoman Dame Ellen MacArthur, an honorary lieutenant commander in the Royal Naval Reserve.

You can read more about this year's event and its two dozen competitors at www.theartemistransat.com

Picture: LA(Phot) Steve Johncock, FRPU West

Honour the fallen

Did you see brutal attack?

DETECTIVES in Portsmouth hope a commando can help bring the attacker of a fellow Royal to justice.

On Friday February 1 this year, musicians from the Royal Marines Band Service were enjoying a night out at the Fuzzy Duck in Guildhall Walk in the city centre.

In a particularly brutal and unprovoked attack, however, one female musician was struck by a man brandishing a bottle outside the pub around 10.15pm.

She almost lost her eye and needed 25 stitches to sew up her severe facial injuries.

The suspect, a civilian, was pointed out to door staff by a Royal Marine, possibly in 42 Commando and believed to be a regular at the pub.

To help Portsmouth detectives prosecute the attacker, the green beret's eyewitness account of the attack is vital.

He – or any other witnesses to the assault – should contact DC Toby Wilson at Kingston Crescent police station on 023 9289 1746 or email toby.wilson@hampshire.pnn.police.uk

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... and remember the Glamorgan

THEY have a window dedicated to them in Portsmouth Cathedral and a site of remembrance at Pangbourne.

But veterans of HMS Glamorgan have no memorial in the islands they helped liberate 26 years ago – until now.

Survivors of the guided missile destroyer – the only warship to come through a hit by Exocet – intend to put up a monument in the Falklands as a permanent reminder of the sacrifice made by 13 shipmates.

Despite taking evasive action, the County-class warship was unable to shake off the Argentine missile and was severely damaged just two days before the conflict ended.

Glamorgan is unique among the Operation Corporate task force ships which suffered

substantial losses in not possessing a cenotaph in the Falklands.

That feeling was reinforced when seven 'Glams' returned to the Falklands last year during 25th anniversary commemorations of the battle for the islands.

Chatting with islanders, veterans found a monument to the destroyer would be warmly welcomed – support echoed by the islands' government.

A site at Hookers' Point – near to where the Exocet was fired – has been identified as a possible location while designs being considered include a Celtic cross – similar to the memorial to the Welsh Guards at Bluff Cove – or a simple Welsh slate stone featuring a plaque and roll of honour; both are equally apt given the ship's heritage.

"Perhaps the final tribute we can make to our fallen Glamorgan comrades would

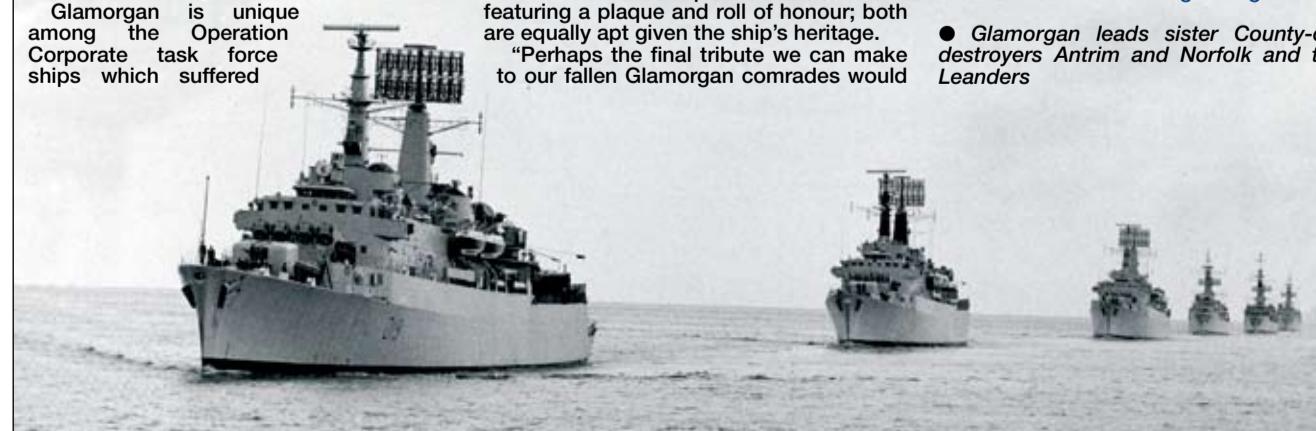
be a memorial on the islands themselves," said Alan Watt, chairman of the HMS Glamorgan Falklands Association.

"During their stay in the Falklands, the seven 'Glams' were genuinely touched by the huge respect and admiration Glamorgan still engenders down there and the overwhelming support for a memorial that the islanders feel would be significant not only to us but also to them."

To date £4,500 has been raised – with the emphasis very much on Glamorgan veterans themselves donating the money to make the memorial a very personal tribute.

More details about the appeal are available from www.hmsglamorgan.co.uk.

● Glamorgan leads sister County-class destroyers Antrim and Norfolk and three Leanders



Hospital ship reunion is tribute to bravery

THE GENTLE chime of tea cups against saucers, sun streaming through picture windows, the prospect of a fine sit-down lunch.

The P&O superliner Aurora was certainly living up to her reputation for style and luxury.

Gentlemen in blazers chatted in groups, women in posh frocks waved to each other across the lounge and greeted long-lost friends.

Some of the men had bald patches; not the usual thinning pates, but the shiny, irregular patches in otherwise lustrous hair that hint at scorched skin.

Odd words floated above the general buzz of conversation; burns, missiles, air attacks, blindness, bombs, life and death.

Aurora was 7,000 miles and 26 years away from the Falklands War, but the very first reunion of sailors, staff, crew and patients from the hospital ship Uganda yielded a potent cocktail of memories, revelations and reflections.

Nicci Pugh, reunion co-organiser, welcomed more than 170 guests on board with a reminder of the strong bonds that remain between staff and patients.

"For all our former patients in 1982, in often difficult and harrowing circumstances, we were there for you," said Nicci, a Senior Nursing Officer with Queen Alexandra's Royal Naval Nursing Service (QARNNS) at the time.

"We didn't let you down, and you repaid us with courage, bravery and fortitude.

"Often it was your fortitude and spirit that kept us going through the bad times.

"We may not have saved your limbs, your sight, or your skin – but we saved your lives.

"We knew what difficult times lay ahead.

"This is to tell you all how much we admire your strength, courage and tenacity to deal with your injuries on a daily basis.

"You are all a credit to your cap badges."

Nicci said that such an event had not been attempted before because for many people the scars, mental as well as physical, were still too raw.

Nicci also thanked the charities which helped support the event – St Dunstan's, which helps blind ex-Service personnel who have severely damaged sight or are blind, BLESMA, the British Limbless Ex-Service Men's Association, and SAMA 82, the South Atlantic Medal Association – and P&O for making the Aurora available during her rapid inter-cruise turnaround.

The choice of liner was apt, as the reception was held close to the Uganda Room, named after the hospital ship.

Rear Admiral Andrew Gough, then a commander and in charge of Naval Party 1830, also addressed the guests.

He spoke of the initial guidance he was given – his bible was an official book which had *Disestablished, disused, not to be used*



● St Dunstaner Terry Bullingham is presented with a braille version of the reunion documents by Nicci Pugh on board the Aurora, watched by Rear Admiral Andrew Gough

Pictures: Simon Rogers, St Dunstan's

in action stamped on the cover.

With just three days to turn schools cruise liner Uganda into hospital ship Uganda, Cdr Gough found that the supplies he was given consisted of "large numbers of iron bedsteads, horsehair mattresses and very large blankets – and not much else."

When the war started, Cdr Gough told the hospital ship's master to head for the Falklands as fast as he could.

"We had no instructions. The MOD just said 'keep going' because no one knew how to use us," he said.

Adm Gough spoke of the close co-operation between the British and Argentinian hospital and ambulance ships, of which Uganda was co-ordinating unit.

The make-do-and-mend approach was a cause for anger when no clothing was supplied to injured men going home.

"P&O staff gave up all the clothing that they could, as did members of NP1830," he said.

"We got clothing from the UK by the time the war was over, and it was second-hand Oxfam stuff, which is frankly disgraceful."

He also spoke of the lack of news and vital information on board, a result of the ship's status under the Geneva Convention, which banned military communications.

This rule could have resulted in an avoidable tragedy.

Adm Gough said when the ship was brought into Stanley after the

"I put my hands over my face, and as I was climbing the vertical ladder I remember the skin was hanging off my hands and arms."

John suffered worse burns than any survivor of the Falklands – estimated at more than 50 per cent – and had to endure days in the sickbay of HMS Hermes before he could get specialist help with the arrival of the hospital ship.

"I was in severe pain all the time, and on high doses of morphine," he said.

John praised the treatment he received, right from the time he reached Hermes.

"The care I received in Uganda and even before was excellent. There was always someone there for me whenever I woke up.

"They tell me they had me measured up for the canvas to drop me over the side, I was so badly injured."

But after five weeks in the Uganda, John was flown home, and just over a year later he was back on duty in Hong Kong.

"It is very touching the number of people who came up to me because they remember me, but I don't remember them," he said of the reunion.

"It's because I spent most of my time in bed – but I remembered Sally Simmons straight away."

Sally (née Middleton) was another nurse in the hospital ship who attended the reunion; she has now trained as a doctor.

Having steeled herself to meet former patients, she – like others – still could not avoid the odd tear when she met John for the first time since 1982.

Marion Houghton (née Stock) said many people believed the Canberra to be the hospital ship, rather than a troop-carrier.

Marion, who was a Senior Naval Nurse (SNN) in 1982, said a talk organised for the night before the reunion had brought back many

Twenty six years ago the Hospital Ship Uganda departed Gibraltar for the uncertainties of the South Atlantic. Only a few days before the ship had been host to hundreds of schoolchildren cruising in the Mediterranean. She was now sailing to war.

For the doctors, nurses and support staff on board, the following months would be the ultimate test of their professionalism and dedication. In the most difficult of conditions the ship became a refuge for the men who had given their all and now lay badly injured, in desperate need of life-saving treatment. Sadly, some did not make it through but what is remarkable given the circumstances is that so many of the patients did.

As you gather to mark those months, now over a quarter of a century past, the vivid memories of the skills, the courage and the comradeship of staff and patients alike will be uppermost in your minds. For some of you, the bonds forged aboard Uganda will have survived well after your return. But for all of you, those moments will remain a life-long testament to all that was achieved.

Last year, at numerous events across the country, we saw that the people of Britain have not forgotten all that you did for us in that conflict. Today, again, we honour and salute you.

Margaret Thatcher

THE RT. HON. THE BARONESS THATCHER, L.G., O.M., P.R.E., M.P.
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memories.

"I don't think we were trained for what we saw and dealt with as nurses," said Marion.

"At Haslar we might have looked after patients with fractured legs, but not the burns that happened on Sir Galahad, or to John Strange.

"Things like traumatic amputations, legs blown off, I don't think anything can prepare you for that."

The point was forced home when Marion and Sally Simmons first reported for duty in the burns unit hastily set up in Uganda's Music Room after the bombing of RFA Sir Tristram and Sir Galahad at Fitzroy on June 8 1982.

"There was a galley just outside the Music Room, and as we entered I said that someone must have burnt the toast," said Marion.

"But it wasn't toast – it was the smell of the burn wounds. When we went in we saw about 45 lads

with distorted puffy faces and eyes pulled into slits by the burns.

"We were all in our early 20s, some very inexperienced; none of us were equipped for that emotionally, no one could be.

"But after the initial shock you just got on with your job.

"It is so good to see people like John Strange here today – he is looking so well.

"He had the worst burns of anyone that we saw.

"People like John had anti-flash gear, so they were not affected in the face, but the lads from Fitzroy were not wearing that."

Marion said one fact of which everyone was proud was that despite dealing with more than 700 patients and carrying out more than 500 surgical procedures, not one single case of infection arose on the hospital ship itself.



● Hospital ship Uganda at Port William in the Falklands in June 1982, photographed by Nicci Pugh



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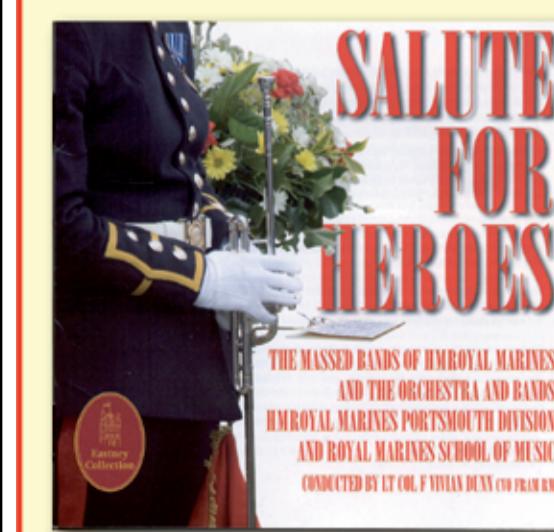


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Picture perfect, perfect



pictures

THE battle done, a Royal Marine Commando pauses to reflect in the bowels of his fortress.

This haunting image from an Allied outpost in Helmand – Forward Operating Base Sperwenghar, 23 miles west of Kandahar – earned the man behind the lens the most coveted prize in Royal Navy photography.

Indeed, in the annals of the Senior Service's photographic branch, no-one has been awarded the distinction 'Photographer of the Year' on two successive years.

Until now.

Twelve months ago, the portfolio of images by 3 Commando Brigade's official chronicler, PO(Phot) Sean Clee, merited the ultimate prize.

The Royals' tour of duty in Helmand straddled the turn of the year 2006-07.

And so too Sean's portfolio, which meant that images from his time in Afghanistan were eligible for the 2007 Peregrine Trophy Awards as well as the 2006 contest.

He wasn't the only photographer to win an award for the second consecutive year, however.

LLogs Stu Hill was named the amateur photographer of the year again, while his colleague at the Fleet Regional Photographic unit in Clyde, PO Tam McDonald, collected the Maritime Prize again.

There is obviously a wealth of talent north of the border, for the team at Faslane earned the trophy which gives the overall competition its name.

In the view of the judges, the Clyde unit submitted the six best images of RN life in 2007 to earn them the Peregrine Trophy.

The awards trace their heritage back to HMS Peregrine, one-time home of the RN School of Photography at Ford, near Arundel, and a statuette donated by the Institute of Professional Photography – which became the Peregrine Trophy.

The awards have mushroomed to embrace both changes in technology and changes in the role of photographers over the past half-century.

The number of entries has also mushroomed: this year there were more than 500 stills photographs alone on which to pass judgment.

That difficult task fell to former photographic officer Terry Hogan, photojournalism lecturer Paul Delmare from Sheffield University and David Viggers, picture editor of the world-renowned Reuters news agency, who pored over the still images.

And Anthony Massey from the Beeb and independent TV producer Brenda Griffiths watched video footage produced by the RN's video and combat camera teams.

Before giving their final verdict, they praised all this year's entries:

"The overall standard of entries this year was very high – portraying a great deal of variety.

"These were wonderful images, taken by highly-accomplished photographers.

"Most of all, the competition shows that Navy photographers have embraced digital imaging – and have successfully managed to retain the foundation aspects of photography."

Results:

Peregrine Trophy for the best portfolio of six images of Service-related subjects: Fleet Regional Photographic Unit Clyde

RN Photographer of the Year for the four best photographs of Service-related subjects submitted by an individual: PO(Phot) Sean Clee (FRPU Drake); highly commended: LA(Phot) Kelly Whybrow (FRPU East)

The Commandant General Royal Marines Prize for the best section portfolio of three images depicting the Royal Marines: PO(Phot) Dave Husbands (3 Cdo Bde); highly commended: LA(Phot) Lee Durant (now out of the Service), PO(Phot) Sean Clee

The Digital Imaging Award for the best image or montage produced digitally: PO(Phot) Jon Hamlet (HMS Ark Royal); highly-commended PO(Phot) Dave Gallagher (FRPU East)

The Maritime Air Prize for the best image of rotary wing operations: LA(Phot) Gregg Macready (HMS Ark Royal); highly commended: LA(Phot) Kelly Whybrow, PO(Phot) Brad Bradbury (NATO Northwood)

The Maritime Award for the best single image of a ship or submarine: PO(Phot) Tam McDonald (FRPU Clyde); highly commended: LA(Phot) Jannine Hartmann (FRPU East), PO(Phot) Mez Merrill (FRPU Clyde)

The News Award for a single image which creates the most impact as a news photograph: LA(Phot) Al MacLeod (40 Cdo)

The Navy News-St Ives Award for the image in Navy News which creates the greatest impact: LA(Phot) Paul A'Barrow (RNNS Yeovilton)

Public Relations Prize for a single image which embraces all aspects of Naval business: LA(Phot) Dave Jenkins (FRPU East); highly commended: LA(Phot) Del Trotter (FRPU Clyde) and Alex Cave (FRPU East)

Sports Photography Award for a single RN sporting image which shows the greatest creativity: PO(Phot) Nicola Harper (CTCRM); highly commended: LA(Phot) Gaz Faulkner (42 Cdo) and Steve Johncock (FRPU West)

Best Equipment Award for the image which best depicts the use of a piece of equipment in the RN or RM: LA(Phot) Pete Smith (FRPU East); highly commended: LA(Phot) Jay Allen (FRPU East)

Open Award for a single photograph of the RN or RM which combines technical and creative ability to create the greatest impact: LA(Phot) Al MacLeod; highly commended: PO(Phot) Sean Clee and LA(Phot) Chris Winter (FRPU West)

'Life Without Limits' Award for the best recruiting image: LA(Phot) Al MacLeod; highly commended: PO(Phot) Dave Husbands and Tam McDonald

RN Student of the Year for the most able and creative naval photographer at the Defence School of Photography: LA(Phot) Del Trotter (FRPU Clyde); highly commended: LA(Phot) Dave Sterritt (FRPU West) and LA(Phot) Pete Smith

RN Rushes Award for the best video 'rushes' – film footage – of RN or RM activity: PO(Phot) Angie Pearce (FRPU East)

Video Production Award: PO(Phot) Terry Seward (DPR(N) Whitehall); highly commended: PO(Phot) Angie Pearce

Amateur Photographer of the Year: LLGos Stu Hill (FRPU Clyde); highly commended: PO Bob Sharples (829 NAS)

Amateur Open Award: Cdr Mark Sheehan (MOD London); highly commended: LLGos Stu Hill

Amateur Maritime Award: LLGos Stu Hill



● A sample of some of the winning images (clockwise from the top)... Three Royal Marines of 42 Commando on patrol near Porsangamon in northern Norway – one of PO(Phot) Dave Husbands' winning portfolio for the CGRM Prize; Mne Will Charters cradles an Afghani girl wounded by Taliban mortar fire – LA(Phot) Al MacLeod's image won him The News Award; HMS Westminster's sea boat team conduct RIB manoeuvres – LA(Phot) Pete Smith took the Best Equipment Prize; the winning sports image of the past 12 months from PO(Phot) Nicola Harper – two Marines come to blows at the novice boxing championships at Lympstone; an Offshore Raiding Craft of Fleet Protection Group Royal Marines races around Gareloch – PO(Phot) Tam McDonald picked up the Maritime Prize for his magic behind the camera; four become one... PO(Phot) Jon Hamlet merged four photographs to create this image of a Harrier GR7 taking off on HMS Ark Royal; and a bevy of Naval helicopters performs at last summer's Yeovilton Air Day, as photographed by the Student of the Year LA(Phot) Del Trotter

She's better than

SHE is more than capable.

She is fast and agile.

And she is powerful.

But there is one big, big problem with Daring – she just doesn't look real.

I know in the grand military scheme of things it doesn't really matter whether she looks real or not.

But when she glided into view on a still May morning off Largs, it was as if we were watching a computer-generated video.

Her uncompromising, boxy lines are as yet unfamiliar, and her size is deceptive.

But it is not just her appearance which is unreal.

The early signs are that BAE Systems have built a ship which is surpassing all expectations in terms of performance.

The media got another chance to look at D32 on Day 33 of her latest series of sea trials – and the relaxed atmosphere on board was in some part down to the fact that they had wrapped up power and propulsion testing, as well as initial weapons tests, two days ahead of schedule and in time for the Bank Holiday weekend.

The most obvious manifestation of the wow factor was provided by her handling.

Her engineers can crank her up from zero to 28 knots in little over a minute, and can then stop her again within five or six lengths.

Her turning circle is between three and four lengths – and as Admiralty Trials Officer Capt Graham Baxter demonstrated her agility in figure-of-eight turns, those of us on the flight deck were like excited children clinging on to rails and any other fixed points as she smoothly heeled 14 degrees to port then starboard.

The wow factor, and the sense of unreality, continued inside her steel skin.

Radar displays in the cool, airy operations room picked out every commercial aircraft in the skies over Scotland and the northern counties of England; sensors can identify threats up to 200 miles from the ship.

The companionways are wide, with spacious flats – a far cry from the cramped, noisy Type 42s that Daring and her sisters will replace.

And – mercifully – the hatches are bigger; at 6ft 3in I normally have to duck through doorways to avoid a permanent parting, but not on Daring.

Down in the junior rates' mess, a game of ten-pin bowling was under way.

Okay, so she's not quite that big; the game was being played on a Wii games console.

But the fact there was a roomy corner to play the game in a spacious junior rates mess is

Having breezed through another set of sea trials with nonchalance, Daring welcomed a party of journalists, including MIKE GRAY, on board to see her in action off Largs



50 per cent of a Type 23, and it pushes her range out to around 7,000 nautical miles (or a round trip from the Solent to New York, to continue the cruise ship analogy) compared to 4,000 or so in the case of the veteran destroyers.

Daring is just over 150 metres long, but snaking back and forth inside her hull are more than 20,000 power and data cables which, if knotted together, would stretch some 620km.

Her flight deck is large enough to park 20 London buses (*How many blue whales does that equate to? – Ed*) but until Mayor Boris Johnson fits rotors to his beloved Routemasters, Daring and her sisters will usually handle Merlin, although Chinooks would present no problems.

And I said she was big; from the tip of her shiny new keel to the top of the spiky egg of her Sampson radar dome she towers 44 metres, about the same, appropriately enough, as Nelson's Column (minus the plinth, for you pedants out there).

Impressive stats, but a ship is more than a collection of facts and figures.

The weather was particularly benign in Bute Sound, between the isles of Bute and Arran, as she was put through her paces, but she was subtly different to other ships I have spent time on.

There was very little vibration, even at high speeds – mainly as a result of the all-electric propulsion system, which requires no troublesome gearboxes and transmits power smoothly from gas turbines to shafts through wires rather than big, noisy and fallible cogs.

So smooth and quiet was the ride that, once within the confines of her hull (there is little open deck space, in keeping with her angular stealthy build), there was rarely a sense of being on board a moving warship.

The extensive bridge is laid out so that everything is facing forward; although paper charts are still around, they tend to be used for planning, while the ship is navigated using electronic systems.

Lt Cdr Philip Harper, who recently handed over the role of navigator to become Executive Officer of HMS Scott, said the large windows gave exceptional visibility on the bridge, and the overall impression was very good.

"Most ships would be thundering about at 26 knots, but we can do it very smoothly," he said.

"It has been impressive on here – like being a waterborne test pilot."

With her hidden boat compartments and fully enclosed fo'c'sle (protecting sailors from the elements as well as reducing radar signatures) she is a far cry from the previous generation which underwent a baptism of fire in 1982.

Indeed, on board Daring for her trials were a handful of veterans from the Falklands War.

Veterans like Lt Paul Snee, for example, who served in Type 21 frigate HMS Alacrity during the Falklands War. "We took the lessons learned from the Falklands and we have now incorporated them into new ship builds," said Lt Snee, who is an Officer of the Watch in Daring, liaising between the Royal Navy and BAE.

The officer, who was due to join Daring's sister Dauntless as *Navy*

- Clockwise from top left: Two shots of Daring at speed; the Type 45 skids round on tight turn; making her way towards a rendezvous off Largs; a Typhoon flies past the new ship; Daring heels over during a tight turn; testing her pre-wet system

Pictures: BAE Systems and Mike Gray



they dared hope

News went to press, added that Daring was "something special" – although he does have a vested interest, because as a senior rate he worked on the T45 design project at Abbey Wood.

Capt Baxter, who took over as CO of the destroyer in January, is another Falklands veteran, having served as PWO(A) in HMS Alacrity.

"The Falklands was an air defence war, but the Type 42s were configured to fight in open ocean – this is the first such ship which is capable of fighting in inshore waters," said Capt Baxter.

"She is an amazing platform. She handles better than a Type 42, turns better than a Type 23, and when fully operational will be no comparison to anything we have had before – and all in a platform of over 7,000 tons.

"The trials have gone very well indeed – exceptionally.

"I am very impressed by her – and envious of the first captain who gets the job when she is handed over to the Navy."

Capt Baxter drove HMS Glasgow and was commander of HMS Invincible during his 39 years in the Navy – but he still has ambitions.

"Doing this job on one of the new carriers would be nice..." he said.

Another ex-RN officer on board is Jennifer Osbaldestin, BAE's Sea Trials Manager, who left the Navy in 2002 after an enjoyable eight-year stint as a mine warfare specialist.

"Daring is one in a million – I think she is amazing," said Jennifer.

"From the capability side, she is still developing, but even from initial glimpses you can see she is a capable ship.

"Inside she has the right balance of trying to make life comfortable on board for the modern sailor, but we are also maintaining a sense that she has got to cope with being in a battle.

"The balance of living space we are affording is much more 21st Century – we cannot expect everyone to live in hammocks."



Big Bang set to bring



● Weapons training was a key part of the Big Bang weekend; here PO Graeme Farrer instructs AB Kayleigh Wright in the small arms training simulator at Faslane

Joined-up approach a success at Pompey

THE joined-up approach of the Big Bang was also in evidence in Portsmouth as Eastern England units gathered to teach and learn.

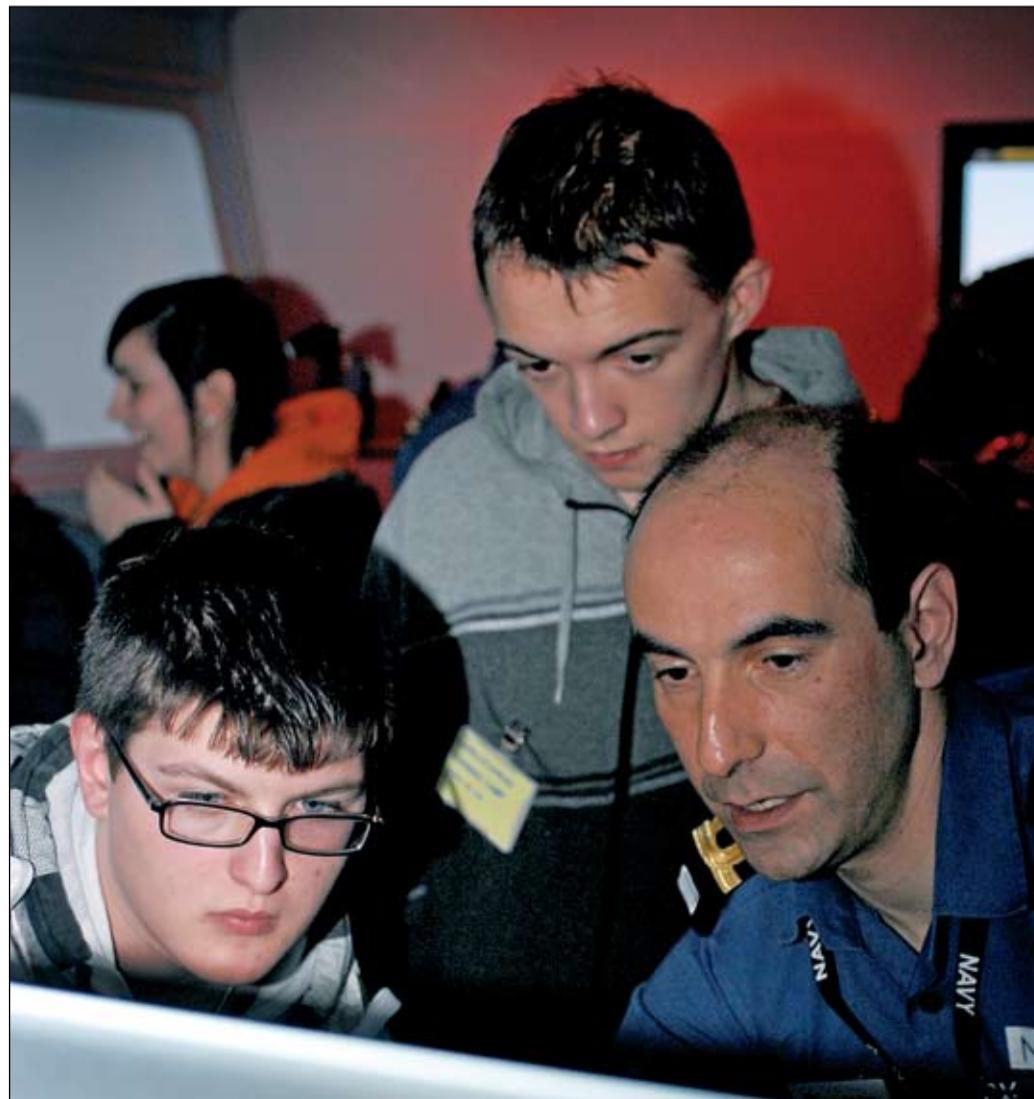
There was the same mix of potential recruits, New Entry personnel and more experienced sailors, and the programme also embraced the Southampton University RN Unit, the Royal Marines Reserve and Solent Coastguard.

HMS Bristol, at Whale Island, was the host unit, but the weekend used a fair bit of Naval estate and equipment, including HMS Lancaster, in Portsmouth Naval Base.

As at Faslane, the New Entry sailors continued their education in Naval ways, picking up basic seamanship skills, firefighting and honing their fitness levels, while there was weapons training for members of the Above Water Force Protection branch.

Young officers were challenged by a range of command tasks.

Cdr Nigel Bassett RNR, MR Staff Officer for Eastern England, said: "I am hugely encouraged by the professionalism of individuals, and it is obvious that they are enjoying the training process immensely."



● Pathfinder bridge simulator systems are explained to potential new recruits by S/Lt Morgan (RNR) during the Big Bang at Faslane (above) while Cdre Stephen Thorne, Commodore Maritime Reserves, meets New Entry staff on parade (right)

WITH a detonation which will be heard for years to come, the latest Maritime Reserves Big Bang was set off at Faslane.

The event brought together reservists from units in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Tyneside to learn, to teach, to recruit and to foster *esprit de corps* in one action-packed weekend.

The Big Bang (not an official title, but one which everyone uses as it trips nicely off the tongue) is an evolving concept, and one which Commodore Maritime Reserves has been instrumental in shaping and nurturing.

Cdre Stephen Thorne travelled north to see his ideas put into action, and was delighted with the way things are developing.

Faslane was the second such event in the Scotland and Northern Ireland Region and mirrored an event being held in the South of England.

The two events demonstrated once more the benefits which accrue from Big Bangs rather than traditional programmes.

A total of 160 reservists travelled to Garelochhead Camp, close to Faslane, where they were joined by 31 potential recruits – people who had shown a keen interest in signing up to the Maritime Reserves.

By bringing them along to a Big Bang, Cdre Thorne believes that they will get a much better feel for what a reservist does and the opportunities the organisation presents, rather than just turning up at a local parade night.

In order to fulfil that remit, the Big Bang has to accurately represent the range of activities which a reservist might expect to undertake.

And the best way to do that is to have subject experts on site to pass on their experience and knowledge.

If those experts are on site, such weekends become perfect vehicles for training current reservists.

With those two key elements in place, other benefits also come into play.

There is the potential to make significant savings, as several training weekends can be 'blobbed up' into a collective Big Bang, while the cost of flying a handful of experts to a Big Bang is far less than transporting a large group of trainees to the experts' home base, be it Nottingham, Plymouth or Edinburgh.

Such gatherings also mean that best practice can more easily be spread throughout the Reserve, as good advice and ideas are passed on by word of mouth.

And there is also the unquantifiable but vital morale factor – such weekends help

Maritime Reservists make a vital contribution to the Royal Navy. Mike Gray watched them go through their paces at a Big Bang weekend at Faslane

engender an *esprit de corps* which is vital in an organisation where careers could easily become disjointed and individuals left feeling isolated unless measures are taken to counter this.

The camaraderie of the Saturday night social event at Scotia's Big Bang, and the meetings of old shipmates now in different units, can only help knit the 2,300 or so RNR a little tighter.

The weekend bill of fare was packed, to say the least.

The Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear Damage Control (CBRNDC) programme saw trainees working in the classroom and in the swimming pool – in once-only suits.

Amphibious Water (AW) officers tested their mettle in the Pathfinder bridge simulator, running through Officer of the Watch manoeuvres, while the logisticians set up and ran mock supply bases.

There were lectures and exercises for public relations staff, and the Above Water Force Protection (AWFP) teams practised skills which are in demand from the RN.

New Entry personnel continued to learn about the Royal Navy and its procedures in preparation for their short, sharp stint at HMS Raleigh, while potential new recruits were given a taste of most of the activities undertaken over the weekend.

Some of the activities were pretty standard – drill, weapon-handling and the like.

But other assets were included to keep interest levels high, such as a Search and Rescue Sea King from Gannet and the Sandown-class minehunter HMS Bangor, which hosted visitors throughout the weekend.

There were more unusual serials, such as guiding blindfolded sailors around an obstacle course to deliver a rugby ball – great for team-building.

The Big Bang initiative builds on developments in recent months that have paved the way for even closer links between reserves and regulars.



universal advantages



● New Entry sailor Gillian Brown from HMS Dalriada is guided through an obstacle course on the football pitches of Faslane by colleagues using only the signals of a whistle

The RNR has long suffered a branding dilemma – the organisation found it difficult to attract people to what was often regarded as a pale version of the dark blue Service, a sort of Dad's Navy.

But no longer can a Reservist officer be identified from his or her uniform – the R was removed from the sleeves and epaulettes last July in a move which spoke volumes about the ever-increasing input of Reservists to Royal Navy operations and exercises.

And that increasing utility means something of a reassessment of exactly what the RNR is, particularly since the internal move to the Fleet camp and the birth of the Maritime Reserve Command in January 2006.

"We were a training organisation under Flag Officer Sea Training, but we have moved to become an organisation delivering operational capability," said Cdre Thorne.

"We are a delivery organisation – at any time, any place, anywhere organisation."

The RNR has also reorganised geographically, based on the new Naval Regional Commanders, which puts Scotia, Dalriada and HMS Caroline in Belfast in the same group.

The Commodore said the Reserve had particularly strong contributions to make in some areas.

A reservist can fill a gapped position, relieving the strain on regulars, and can also 'back-fill' – for example, a reservist helicopter pilot could take up a support role and release a regular pilot for the front line.

Certain niche areas are a particular forte of the Reserve, such as AWNIS (Allied Worldwide Navigational Information System), NCAGS (Naval Co-operation and Guidance for Shipping) and the MOS (Media Operations Specialists).

"We also have a capability in terms of the RN in the public eye," continued Cdre Thorne.

"I have got 13 RNR units around the country, and a number of RMR detachments."

"I'm flying the White Ensign in a lot of areas where the Royal Navy does not."

"A good example is HMS Calliope, right on the bank of the Tyne in the middle of Newcastle and Gateshead."

Another contribution was right on the doorstep of Big Bang.

Exercise Joint Warrior was half-way through its two-week course, putting people, ships and aircraft through a major test of their ability to function effectively and work together.

Amongst those staffing the exercise out of Faslane were 48 reservists – and Capt Paddy McAlpine, director of the Joint Maritime Operational Training Staff (JMOTS), said: "Joint Warrior would not be able to exist in its current form without the support of the RNR."

Indeed, at least two reservists who attended the weekend found themselves co-opted in from Big Bang to help run the wargames out to sea.

"We are now stepping up to the plate in a number of areas, and we are deploying more now than we have done since World War 2," said Cdre Thorne.

Cdre Thorne said that when asked, the Officer in Charge of 40 Cdo said no distinction was made between reservists and regulars.

"He replied that they are part of the deployment party, bringing different life skills and perhaps more maturity, so they are mixed and matched to bring better balance to the party," said Cdre Thorne.

Capt Ian Robinson, Capt Regions, said the RNR was a vital resource for Fleet.

"There are people in the reserve tank, and we are the tap; Fleet is not particularly bothered about how the engineering behind the tap works – they just want the right people at the right time," said Capt Robinson.

Besides providing a reservoir of talent for Fleet, Cdre Thorne is also keen that the Maritime Reserve should also maximise the skills of its members.

So a relatively new member of the Reserve, who has been 'Navalised' and is weapon trained, can stand guard on a ship's brow or in a strongpoint, in some cases (as it presently happening) releasing a Royal Marine for other more pressing duties ('blue berets supporting green berets').

Moving from generalist to specialist, reservists build on those foundations to work in a particular field.

And later in a career there is still the opportunity to retrain and redeploy out of specialisation.

A recent example saw around 15 Maritime Reservists train to deploy as Phalanx operators at Basra in Iraq.

So the pressure remains to recruit, the target is around 500 a year for the RNR.

"It is a very exciting time to join the RNR. We all joined to be used, and we are being used," said Cdre Thorne.

One person at Faslane can vouch for the value of a Big Bang weekend, though she took no part in Scotia's version.

Susan Morris works as a wardroom steward for Babcock Marine, and also has a job with Marks and Spencer in Dumbarton.

Last October she went along for a quick look on the Saturday morning – she planned to stay no longer as it was her birthday and she was going on a night out with friends.

In fact she stayed a lot longer, and reined in the celebrations that evening to be able to go back the following day.

She was won over by the Big Bang, and is now hoping to join the Reserves this summer.

● **Maritime Reserve Command Warrant Officer Tony Matthews watches New Entry sailors from HMS Dalriada during a drill session (right) while colleagues test survival suits in the Faslane swimming pool (below)**



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253 HMS Chatham
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421 HMS Vengeance
423 HMS Walney
426 HMS Westminster
430 HMS York
431 RFA Wave Ruler
432 RFA Wave Knight
433 RFA Argus
434 RFA Bayleaf
435 RFA Black Rover
436 RFA Cardigan Bay
438 RFA Diligence
439 RFA Fort Austin
440 RFA Fort George
441 RFA Fort Rosalie
442 RFA Fort Victoria
443 RFA Gold Rover
446 RFA Largs Bay
447 RFA Lyne Bay
448 RFA Mounts Bay
449 RFA Orangeleaf

(Parcel) force for good



MAIL equals morale, as every sailor knows.

One of the most common grousers in a ship on deployment is about the mailbags that mysteriously hop from foreign port to foreign port, always annoyingly ahead of or behind the ship's arrival.

Like many things in life, especially logistics, it's a service that is only noticed when it goes wrong. The fact that it goes right so much of the time is no mean feat of organisation on the part of the British Forces' Post Office and Royal Mail.

The MOD has recently invested £30m in its new state-of-the-art, fully-automated postal centre, which moved last November from Mill Hill to RAF Northolt, in West London.

Here, a staff of 150, uniformed and civil servants, handle 22 million items of Forces' mail annually.

The importance of a good Forces postal system has been recognised since the 18th Century and a British commander in the

EVEN in an age of global telecommunications, mobile phones, e-mail and the internet, nothing touches the heart of a sailor on deployment more than a letter or parcel from home. So how does your missive get from postbox red to pusser's grey? **SARAH FLETCHER** visited the HQ of British Forces Post Office to learn the answer.

World War 2 remarked that his troops could march for three or four days without food on the strength of a cheering letter.

A good mail service is particularly important to the Navy, explained Lt Mark Van Den Bergh, Fleet Mail Officer at BFPO.

"I think out of all the Services, the Navy is the most used to moving around and sailors understand how important it is to get your post while you're away," he said.

He explained: "The Army have been in Germany for years, but they live out there and tend to remain in one place. When they go on exercise, they have Field Post Offices. The RAF are usually based in their air stations. Only ships are constantly on the move."

As Fleet Mail Officer, Lt Van Den Bergh's aim is to have the mailbags waiting on the jetty when an RN ship comes alongside in a foreign port. Given the frequency of programme changes, it is impressive that he and his team achieve this as often as they do.

"Sorting out mail perhaps isn't the most exciting job in itself, but the people who work here realise how important it is," said Lt Van Den Bergh.

He added: "And in these days of mobile phones, emails and e-blueys and every other modern form of communication, it's nice to remember there's still nothing quite like getting a letter."

Out of the three services, the Navy presents the most challenges to the BFPO system.

"Their programmes change frequently, and some foreign ports are not completely secure and reliable, so the ship may wish to have the mail sent elsewhere. It requires a lot of organisation and sometimes ingenuity," explained Lt Van Den Bergh.

He has a staff of two RPOs and a leading logistician working directly for him. Running the day-to-day logistics of the Navy effort is the Ships' Air Programmer, Tilly Clifton.

Many navigators and posties in ships know Tilly by name, even if they have never met her, as they talk to her when they ring BFPO to discuss their mail requirements and give programme changes. At the old offices in Mill Hill she had a wall covered with postcards sent from ships.

Tilly has worked at BFPO for 35 years and probably knows more about the movements of the Navy than most people at Fleet HQ. "The job we do here can seem routine, but it gives you a lot of satisfaction knowing it works," she said.

Tilly and her staff run a travel office for ships mailbags, booking them on to commercial flights to destinations all over the world.

● **Sacks appeal...** HMS St Albans' sailors sort out stacks of mail in Dubai during the frigate's 2006 Gulf patrol

Picture: LA(Phot) Kelly Whybrow, FRPU East

While mail for Germany goes by road container service, that destined for Iraq and Afghanistan (including ships operating in the Northern Gulf) is usually delivered by the RAF.

The mail for individual ships generally goes by commercial air. In 2006 and 2007, BFPO sent to deployed ships, more than 47,000kg (103,000lbs in old money) of mail to 74 different overseas ports.

If a major naval deployment is coming up involving several ships and RFAs, Lt Van Den Bergh can take a team of Army posties out in support of the system.

In 2004 he took a team to Norfolk, Virginia, for the Exercise Aurora/Rapid Alliance deployment of 21 ships and elements of 3 Commando Brigade along with Army and RAF participation, involving over 5,500 UK forces personnel.

He and his team drove 1,200 miles in one day from Washington to Mayport to deliver the mail to HMS Invincible, going via Charlestown for a mail-drop to HMS Cornwall.

"I was determined they were going to get their post, because I know what a morale boost it is. They were pretty pleased to see us," Lt Van Den Bergh explained.

"We also offer to take on mail deliveries for other countries during large international exercises, because we have the capability and the experience to do it."

The biggest change to the BFPO's workload in the last five years has been Operation Telic (Iraq) and Herrick (Afghanistan) with 23 per cent (the enduring free packet service has now raised this to 30 per cent) of all BFPO mail destined for these countries, rising to 48 per cent during Christmas surge.

Prince Harry criticised the mail services to Afghanistan when he returned after his deployment, but the challenge of moving mail to the front-line in an operational theatre should not be underestimated.

The surge in festive deliveries is huge, and every Christmas the BFPO takes on extra staff from the three Services to help with the seasonal workload.

The average monthly weight of mail shifted through BFPO in 2007 was about 67,000kg, peaking

in December at 186,000kg (183 tons).

This was not just families sending cards, presents and letters, but an outpouring of gifts, parcels and missives from the British public keen to show support for the boys and girls at the front.

The senders may not know anyone in Iraq, or Afghanistan, but they want to show their appreciation with letters, cakes, chocolate, sweets, soap and shower gel.

Such generosity does wonders for morale, but it inevitably slows down the system.

"They will send aerosols, although we're not allowed to post them (aerosols are pressurised containers and therefore classified as dangerous air cargo), so every year BFPO auctions hundreds of aerosols among its staff and gives the proceeds to Forces' charities. Last year we had 8,000," said Lt Van Den Bergh.

The other well-known snags to the system are red envelopes for Valentine's Day (the automated system does not like reading red or gold ink) and senders who add a country to the address. The machines are designed to 'read' the last line of the address, which should only be the letters BFPO followed by the number.

The BFPO is constantly on the lookout for improvements to its service. The e-bluey, a message sent by email but printed out as a letter, has been particularly popular since it was introduced in 2000.

Another popular innovation has been the 'photo-bluey' – a photograph sent by email which can be printed and delivered, potentially within about 45 minutes. The system needs a colour printer to work, but these are currently restricted to Operations Telic and Herrick.

Although most Armed Forces personnel now have mobile phones, there are areas without coverage, or when they can't be used for operational reasons.

But with a 'photo-bluey' a sailor or Marine could be looking at their child's birthday party on the day it happens.

■ **FOR** more details about BFPO and its services, visit www.bfpo.mod.uk

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TIS a perfect spring morning in the small port of Koper, Slovenia's principal outlet to the sea, hemmed in by richly-wooded hills.

A layer of early morning mist and haze shrouds the docks. The derricks of cranes rise above it, but the ships in port are hidden behind a milky veil.

The northern Adriatic is a millpond. A diver clammers out of the water on to the quay and gives the thumbs up.

The pas boat – a Slovenian pleasure cruiser – is safe to go.

Fifteen minutes later, a quick hop on to a pontoon, a dart up the accommodation ladder and we're aboard HMS Somerset, one of six Allied warships dotted about the bay of Koper, most at anchor, a couple shrouded by the haze hugging the docks.

The pontoon is towed away, the fenders raised, so too the anchor, and 'Super Somerset' turns for the open waters of the Adriatic and a mid-sea rendezvous with the rest of the Standing NATO Maritime Group 2 sextet.

Except that Somerset's starting to sail in circles. There's a man overboard. Fred, the Frank Spencer of the mateot world, has fallen in the sea. Again.

In five minutes and 20 seconds Fred is picked up by the sea boat. The rescue swimmer follows him into the water, paddling on his back to collect a marker buoy tossed into the Adriatic to mark Fred's location.

The remainder of the task force sails on blithely. *Those wacky Britons...*

For although Somerset is part of a NATO task group, she continues doing things that the RN always does... like keeping the sailors on their toes.

Such British idiosyncrasies are the exception, not the rule. Internally, Somerset is very British (sausage, bacon and eggs for breakfast, for example). Externally, she's flying the flag for NATO first, for Her Majesty second.

And that's not easy to get your head around. For the Devonport frigate takes her orders not from Northwood, not from Fleet Headquarters



WITH the Navy's emphasis on the Gulf, it's easy to overlook other longer-standing commitments, not least its constant NATO role. RICHARD HARGREAVES spent a week with **HMS Somerset** in the Med with Standing NATO Maritime Group 2.



in Pompey, but from Turkey's Admiral Sinan Ertugrul.

His force – flagship TCG Salihreis, USS Gonzalez, FGS Niedersachsen, HS Kountoriotis, ITS Euro plus Somerset – casts its net from the Pillars of Hercules to the shores of the Levant.

It is a mission which NATO has performed in the Med in various guises for more than 35 years.

The organisation itself is coming up to its 60th birthday. So that must mean that after six decades of operating, it has co-operation down to a fine art.

Er, ish.

For while the mission of all six ships in the force is united – to safeguard the Mediterranean and champion the NATO cause – their methods are similar, but far from identical.

Weapons are not standard. Ships are not standard. Helicopters are not standard. And each navy has its particular way of doing things.

Which means lots of use of those good old RN euphemisms 'interesting' and 'challenging'.

Take a practice for a demonstration day for leaders from across Europe – wooing of politicians is vital for NATO's longevity.

Manoeuvring a six-ship force is never easy. Now add the problem of engines.

Each ship is different. Somerset's diesels can propel her through the water at up to about 14kts. After that she relies on her gas turbines.

Except that (a) the turbines guzzle gas, really guzzle gas – "You can just watch the fuel gauge falling," says Deputy Marine Engineer Officer Lt Emma Barter; and (b) they don't like running below 6kts... and don't like being started up again for another ten minutes.

And for this demonstration we're jumping about. Sometimes at 3kts, sometimes at 8, sometimes over 20, sometimes dead stop. Bit of a pain.

Now introduce the language barrier. English and French are the two NATO languages. The

garlic lovers aren't part of the group presently, so English will suffice.

Fine. Except that it's only the natural language of Somerset and the Americans. For the rest of the force, it's a second, perhaps third or fourth tongue.

Luckily, there's the handy NATO codebook which simplifies things. By 'handy' I mean 'lever-arch file' and by 'simplify' I mean page after page of complicated manoeuvres converted into curt codewords.

And all of these orders have to be passed between the ships encrypted, then decrypted by their recipients and passed on to the command team.

Fine if it's daily orders or some long-term plan. Now try it with three ships abreast, turning at 90°... whilst trying to launch and recover helicopters.

Interesting and challenging.

So from the bridge of Somerset the team watch as the Greek frigate Kountoriotis sails across our bow – ideal if you're crossing the 'T', not quite so good if you're trying to form three warships in line, equally spaced.

Somerset's CO Cdr Rob Wilson shakes his head. "I don't like the way this is going. Messy, really messy."

Over the airwaves there's some lively Mediterranean babble followed by equally-excited garbled remarks in faltering English.

But when it works, well it's bloody impressive.

As the demonstration reaches its climax, three ships – Somerset, Kountoriotis and Euro – are charged with boarding three 'suspicious' vessels – Gonzalez, Salihreis and Niedersachsen.

Two lines of warships, three abreast close to within a few hundred yards of each other. A handful of 'action men' slide hurriedly down ropes from helicopters.

Among the 'action men' is AB(WS) 'Smudge' Smith, normally found in the bowels of the operations room.

But you can't spend all your time staring at a computer screen...

So today he's dropping out of Duke, Somerset's Lynx, on to the flight deck of the Gonzalez.

"It's purely voluntary and there's no extra pay, but it gets you off the ship and it is interesting," says Smudge.

He completed two weeks of Naval Military Training at HMS Raleigh to learn the art of boarding a merchantman including sliding down a rope from a helicopter on to a deck (not the preserve, as I mistakenly thought, of the Royal Marines).

"It certainly gets the heart pumping," says Smudge with typical RN understatement. Depending on how tightly your (gloved) hands grasp the rope, you slither down it at up to 20mph from heights of between 15ft and 40ft (any greater height requires the commandos).

Two shipmates follow Smudge down the line. With impressive synchronicity, 'sticks' of boarding teams drop from Pasha, the Salihreis's Huey, and Beagle, Euro's whirlybird on to the decks of Salihreis and Niedersachsen, while boarding teams scurry up rope ladders from sea boats at the same time.

This is a taste of Operation Active Endeavour at its most active.

It was NATO's first major operation post the September 11 attacks. It remains in force today.

We have written about Active Endeavour in these pages before. We've written about boarding operations before (almost solely in the Gulf).

Active Endeavour is not on the same scale. There are boardings daily in and around Iraq's oil platforms. Ships attached to Active Endeavour have carried out fewer than 150 physical inspections of vessels in the past five years.

But their domain is so much vaster: from the Rock to the Holy Land, from the Bosphorus

to the gateway to Suez.

And just because there are so few boardings does not mean that the NATO ships don't know what's going on.

Rarely, if ever, can we have been better informed about movements on the high seas.

All ships are now 'electronically tagged' with the Automatic Identification System, informing the world and his dog where they are, how fast they are moving and, in instances, what their cargo is (they don't like to advertise the latter for fear of piracy).

At the back of Somerset's bridge sits a fairly bog-standard laptop. Into it is fed reams of data – thanks largely to Lloyd's – and the information from AIS, plotting its position on a map.

Pick a contact at random somewhere off Trieste: Kapitan Ezovitov. Now flick through the list of options: previous names, engine specs, accommodation facilities, cargo. Not all the details have been entered, but the important info is there.

And then – and here's the really clever bit – the AIS data is fed to the ship's electronic chart system, WECDIS. Sometimes, AIS plots the merchantmen on the screen sooner than the radar.

"It's pretty amazing how much information is out there," enthuses Somerset's XO Lt Cdr Simon Chapman.

In the past checks might have taken a flick through a book, or a phone call to the UK. These days it's there at the press of a button.

But you cannot rely on computers for everything. Common sense, intuition still count for something. If, for example, Kapitan Ezovitov was a 100,000-ton supertanker normally found running between St Petersburg and Gdansk, and in front of you was a 1,000-ton banana boat chugging through the Adriatic, then something's not right.

"Most of the ships are regulars – they tell you what they're doing because they're used to seeing us. We try to make a point of not calling them too often, otherwise they get fed up," explains Lt Cdr Chapman.

AIS is only one part of the intelligence jigsaw. In the operations room, electronic warfare experts listen to radar.

Actually, their computer system listens to radar. You really wouldn't want to fill your iPod

with 'radar's greatest blips', because it resembles anything from a lacklustre Sputnik to white noise squawks.

Luckily, just as the sonar experts have a database of submarine noises to identify a track, so NATO has a library of radar sounds – vessels have a radar 'fingerprint' – allowing the operations room team to identify a craft. You can even go searching for a ship, based on the unique noise its radar makes.

On top of that there's intelligence coming in from Northwood or NATO HQ. Every now and then, they'll ask the force to investigate a suspicious vessel.

So far this deployment, the seas have been devoid of ne'er-do-wells.

"The only suspicious vessels we've found so far have been alongside," a slightly disappointed AB(WS) 'Dodge' Long says. "But it's important that you learn about how the bad guys work."

And the bad guys are, well, bad.

"It is worth remembering that for countries in this region, people trafficking and illegal immigration are real issues – we're quite fortunate that in the UK we have pretty secure waters," explains Cdr Wilson.

People traffickers treat their cargo as just that – cargo, not human beings. If they spy the authorities anywhere near their ships, they'll simply toss their 'cargo' overboard.

And then the people in the sea become the responsibility of the authorities. They have a human, a moral duty to rescue them, but where do you take them when rescued?

Yet there is a palpable feeling among the sailors that rather than simply keeping tabs on the bad guys, they wouldn't mind the chance to grapple with them, less out of some gung-ho bloodlust than a chance to stop criminals getting away.

"The frustrating thing for the lads and lasses is that they want to see the bad guys – they want to sail up to them and stop them in their tracks," says Cdr Wilson.

"It's more a case of quietly tracking someone and passing that information on to the authorities."

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Not all the task group's time is devoted to Active Endeavour, however. There are some pretty hefty exercises to take part in too. Super Somerset has already hunted submarines during Noble Manta off Sicily and Mavi Balina off Turkey.

She's about to do the same again off the heel of Italy.

Good job she's got some top kit, then. Evening pipes sign off proclaiming Somerset as the best anti-submarine warrior in the West.

That she can boast is largely down to the low-frequency Sonar 2087, designed to cope with the threat of today's ultra-quiet boats.

2087 comprises 'Thunderbird 4', a bright yellow towed body weighted down several hundred feet below Somerset, and 2,500 metres (1½ miles) of towed array, wound on a huge drum in the winch well just forward of the quarterdeck.

From a small control room overlooking both deck and well, CPO 'Bagsy' Baker controls both array and body initially (before handing over to the sonar centre in the operations room).

Spooling out 2,500 metres of array is "extremely boring" Bagsy sighs. Thankfully, lowering Thunderbird 4 is "more interesting to watch" as the gizmo slides backwards off the ship and is lowered into the water.

As for the array, it is fed slowly out through a pipe, salt water spilling on to the deck as it lubricates the tubed wizardry being lowered into the ocean (it's washed with fresh water on its return journey).

It takes 45 minutes to an hour to deploy, and every bit as long to recover; the latter operation demands constant watch, for the array can become twisted as

it's brought back on to its giant storage drum.

The first section of the sonar is a rope 'tail' which effectively acts as ballast. The next 100 metres is the really clever bit, the 'active listener', a 450kg black rubber tube containing state-of-the-art hydrophones and sensors which listen for a response from the ping (a strange whistling sound) emitted by Thunderbird 4.

The rest of the array is devoted to the passive listener, whose ears are on the 'lookout' for any submarine making a noise.

"We can see submarines before they can see us. Of course, they know we're there because we're

pinging, but there's nothing they can do about it because we're too far away," says Somerset's Weapon Engineer Officer Lt Cdr David Lewis, rubbing his hands with malevolent amusement. "Hee hee."

He adds: "It looks a bit Heath Robinson, but it's an awesome bit of kit."

It is. Experimental too (it's not yet officially operational). And temperamental.

Last month we reported how the 2087 towed array needed replacing. All 2,500 metres of it.

Well, the good news is that not all 2,500 metres needed replacing. Just the active listener bit.

Waiting for Somerset in Trieste were: one barge, one huge cotton reel and one huge cotton reel with 100 metres of active listening array wrapped around it.

The faulty array was wound on to the empty reel... and the replacement was unwound off the second drum and attached to the remainder of Somerset's passive array.

It took a fair bit of sweat and tears from the weapon engineer department, a few sketches to explain to the Italian dockyard workers what was going on,

and about five earth hours to complete the job (not the three days predicted).



● Cdr Rob Wilson reflects on Somerset's NATO deployment from the port bridge wing of his frigate

Once fixed, 2087 must be tested. But you cannot just test it. First you need permission from NATO to, momentarily, 'do your own thing'. And if you do 'do your own thing', then you have to play catch up to re-join the force and resume your NATO duties.

Indeed, if something goes wrong aboard the ship, Somerset cannot simply head for the nearest port to sort it out; she must fit in with the NATO programme.

"We're a NATO, not a national, asset. The important thing is that the admiral regards Somerset as a valuable part of his task group," explains Cdr Wilson.

NATO has other peculiarities. You cannot have a ceremonial sunset. It's too British – or Italian or German for that matter on their respective ships. Lowering the NATO flag at such a gathering is perfectly ok, however.

In fact, there are a few things in NATOLand which lead to raised eyebrows, knowing glances, a few barbed comments.

There is a temptation to want to take charge, to do it our way. That would perhaps be arrogant. It would certainly be wrong; Allied warfare is about compromise. And who's to say that the RN way is always right?

"Every ship brings something

different to the table and there are some great people out here in the task force," Cdr Wilson stresses.

"I like to think that whatever Somerset does, we make an excellent fist of it and I hope that the admiral does as well."

"All I ask of the ship's company is that they take it seriously and give it 100 per cent. They aren't just representing the UK, but NATO as well."

And that's important. The high number of port visits isn't to allow the sailors plenty of runs ashore but to fly the flag for the Allies, to show the peoples of the Mediterranean what NATO does.

For every port, there's an

agent to arrange things – food, fuel, gash, paint perhaps, spare parts. Will the ship need a braw, handlers on the quay, or will she be berthed outboard of an Allied vessel?

On a deployment for HM Government, you can plan port visits weeks, perhaps months in advance.

Working for NATO HQ in Naples, you get perhaps three or four days to sort everything out – "which makes the last few days before a visit quite chaotic," says Lt Cdr Steve Quantrill, Somerset's Logistics Officer.

"It's not easy for the ports either. They have six warships to

squeeze in – and the agents find they have six ships all demanding the same thing at the same time."

High demand invariably leads to high prices. Don't expect to get much change out of 50,000 Euros (£39,500) for a pontoon and pas boat in Naples, for example.

All these foreign port visits are hard on Jack and Jenny's wallet, too.

You'll actually hear Somerset sailors complain that there have been 'too many runs ashore' (Gasp – Ed).

CPO 'Chuck' Norris concurs. "I think the lads are glad to get away from land, to save a bit of

money," he tells his captain at a daily briefing.

At least the ship can ease the burden on those well-worn wallets, thanks to the Bank of Somerset.

At any one time there's more than £100,000 in dubbins safely locked away in the ship's safes – chiefly Euros and Dollars.

The question, in this internet global economy age, is: why? Wouldn't it be easier for Jack to wander up to El Banco cash point, pop his card in the slot and draw out lots of Johnny Foreigner spondoolies?

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Well, yes. But it would also cost him a lot more. Banks like to make money. Especially abroad. Lots of lovely exchange rates, plus an overseas 'handling charge'.

There's no commission, no handling charge in the ship's office and invariably the deal it can get is as good as any the banks can offer.

To be fair to the ship's company, it's most definitely not a case of hitting the first bar in every port. There's plenty of adventurous training, sightseeing, some even cycled from Trieste to Koper to catch up with the frigate.

And that old slogan 'Join the Navy, see the world' still holds some water here, for there are ports on a Med deployment which the RN rarely visits: Koper in Slovenia, Palermo in Sicily, Haifa in Israel, Durrës in Albania.

"Albania's a real divide – there are beggars on the streets, but then you'll see people driving past in Ferraris," says CPO(ME) Jay Daniel, who's spent five years on Somerset and has another two to go.

"Trieste was good and so was Koper. But the time at sea is too short. If you're spending two days alongside and two days at sea, it's hard to get into your working routine, particularly with night duties."

Cdr Wilson nods his head. "Four days is not enough. There are a lot of bitty spells at sea which is hard on people."

'Bitty spells at sea' and regular visits to port do nothing to ease the burden on the catering department either.

Alongside, the galley prepares meals as usual – there's no rest in port (although some of the ship's company do, on occasions, chip in to help and give the chefs a break).

At sea, the ship's company sits down three times a day to eat; alongside "it's a case of gazing into a crystal ball," laments LLogs (Catering Services (Preparation)) Craig Spurgeon.

Some sailors will want to sample the local delicacies, others will want to save some dough and eat on board – and, says Craig, "there's no real way of knowing who is staying and who is not".

What is left over is re-used where possible, but the days of chicken stew, chicken curry, chicken pie and chicken soup for days after a Sunday roast chicken are long gone (older readers will be pleased to know that 'train smash' – breakfast leftovers turned into a side dish – makes a reappearance on some lunchtimes, however).

"By the time you've spent three months at sea, you know what the ship wants," says Craig. "They do like their cold meals and salads – healthy dishes. But they also like their spice as well."

And pies. Steak and ale. Pork. Steak and kidney. Much to the enjoyment of the Aussie observer with the ship's Lynx flight. Pie (apparently) is Australia's national dish (the filling, it seems, is irrelevant).

"Scran is a big morale issue," Craig stresses. "If you're going somewhere gash, then you make an effort to treat everybody to some good food, T-bone steaks for example."

Which is why throwing £1K's worth of scran, the treats – ice cream, gateaux, cakes – away in Slovenia thanks to a freezer breaking down was a bit of a downer (on the plus side, Somerset also ditched her supply of sweetcorn – "the devil's vegetable" according to her logistics officer).

Good ol' traditional English butter ran out long ago. But not burro. (I was convinced it was a spoof Somerset dialect of 'butter'; the reality is rather less interesting – and, apparently, less palatable. Burro is an Italian butter. No matter how much – or, more generally, how little – is eaten, there's always some left...).

At least, for the most part, food aboard is cheaper. But it still remains a challenge to feed 180 sailors three meals for the princely sum of £1.90 each.

"You can't get one Big Mac for £1.90, let alone buy three meals a day for that amount," Craig points out.

It is good that you can't buy a mega burger for £1.90. Not for the fast food joints, of course, but it's good for the health of the ship's company, a matter which keeps clubz – LPT Matt Brown – and Doc – Surg Lt Owen Rainey – occupied day and night.

More than 100 of the ship's company volunteered for a health kick at the beginning of the deployment, with their weight and blood pressure taken, a body mass index calculated and a fitness package carefully worked out by clubz.

There are monthly weigh-ins, trophies dangled as carrots, and a good 40 or so sailors have stuck with the 'fit to fight club'.

"We're not dieticians, but we know enough to pass it on and the ship's company is very receptive to the fitness programme," says Surg Lt Rainey.

Then there's the dreaded weed to contend with; there's a sizeable number of Somerset sailors who enjoy a smoke, but there should be half a dozen fewer by the time the frigate sees the Hoe once more.

And there's another S-word to think about: sex. "Sailors are

sailors," says Surg Lt Rainey. "They are going to go to bars and the like."

"We could go down to the messes and talk about sexual health in front of 40 guys and then offer condoms. No-one's going to take that."

The solution is simple and seems to work. From time to time the sickbay door is covered with leaflets and condoms, sometimes spelling out S E X, at others 'subtly' depicting a rather large John Thomas. It works. The condoms disappear, grabbed sporadically by passing sailors.

A dose of a sexually transmitted infection is less than pleasant. Far more serious is a bug which can lay low an entire ship's company.

For between three and five days gastroenteritis did just that, knocking down roughly 15 sailors at any one time.

"If you take 15 people out of the equation, that's a huge number of people," says Surg Lt Rainey.

Basic hygiene saved the day. Those affected could only use specific heads, messes were restricted, and there was no brewing up for your mates – that's a surefire way to spread disease.

And so it was that the bug was mastered. "That really was quite satisfying – to know that you'd had an impact," says LMA Steve Pickering. "We had to nail it on the head and we did."

For Surg Lt Rainey it was proof that what his team does is very much 'real life'.

He explains: "Being medics is a big responsibility. A lot of what the ship does are drills, exercises. Our job is a real job with real patients."

Wellbeing is not merely about physical fitness. Mental fitness is just as important.

The medical department can offer some help and counselling. But there's no bish aboard Somerset for this deployment, so for the most part it's down to Jack and Jenny to keep spirits up in their own inimitable way.

They can tune into Somerset TV, not a round-up of cider festivals in Yeovil or tractor racing from Wells, but a 30 to 45-minute magazine show compiled by clubz (the presenter) and the doc (cameraman/director) every month or so.

From their studio (the sickbay cunningly disguised with a White Ensign hiding most of the features), the duo offer a mix of the informative (details on port visits) and the downright silly, normally at the expense of shipmates.

There's *You've Been Done*,

a homage to the late king of pranksters Jeremy Beadle. The ops officer's been done. He received a spoof signal, a rocket from the Turkish admiral, and found himself outside the CO's cabin at 5am. Luckily, the CO was in on the prank...

"People see me and clubz walking along together and they immediately scarper, convinced something's going on," says Surg Lt Rainey.

And there's another homage. The Stig Run. Like *Top Gear*, minus the car of course, sailors have to complete a 'race track' around the upper deck faster than The Stig (whose identity is a mystery). The time to beat is 28 seconds. Oops. Forgot to mention it's in a farnought suit...

Only a handful of people have attempted – and failed – to beat The Stig. But such challenges are vital if you're to keep that spark running from January until August.

Uckers is a mainstay of wardroom life (played more passionately here than on most ships evidently, aided by two oversized dice). And so too is homicide.

The wardroom are a murderous lot, gripped by a game of 'assassin' – think *Cluedo* but with the entire ship as their playground and all the panoply of weapons as their tools.

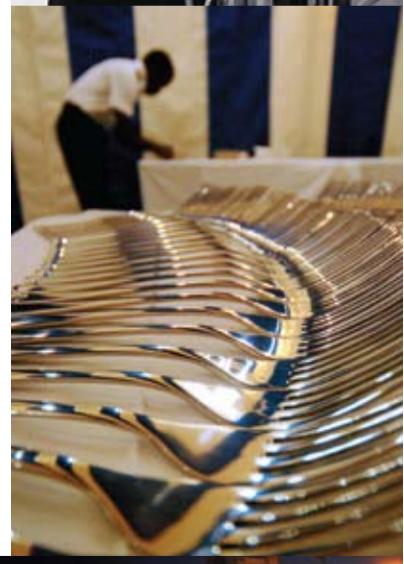
The CO was among the first to fall – his face is obliterated by a large gravestone on the 'Wall of the Fallen'. He died in his own cabin at the hands of a young officer wielding that deadliest of weapons, a bra (*must have got it off a Royal Marine – Ed*).

Killing is something only the wardroom gets involved in. Anyone can fly. Or rather everyone believes they can fly, courtesy of birdman contest (the sport *du jour* of ships on deployment).

And some people really can fly. Lt Pete 'The Pilot' Birch clocked up his 1,000th hour in the skies flying Duke, Somerset's Lynx, on one of those many NATO dress rehearsals. He celebrated with a burger lovingly prepared by the crew of the Gonzalez... or rather he would have, had not the 'Hamburglar' surreptitiously deprived him of it.

And there you have it. More than a dozen murders. Two dozen port visits. Lots of dib-dobs. A hamburger thief. Several submarines hunted. Interesting and challenging times with our Allies. Hundreds of ships monitored. A dose of Delhi belly. Jeremy Beadle. That's seven months in the life of a British warship attached to NATO.

Pictures: PO(Phot) Tam McDonald and Dave Gallagher



Deaths

Lt Cdr Danyel 'Toby' Tobias Pakes. Passed out from Manadon July 1995. Served in Minerva, Victorious and Abbey Wood (Astute project). November 5. Aged 35.

Michael 'Paddy' Meenan. CPO (AH). Served in Ark Royal, Hermes and Eagle also RNAS Yeovilton, Portland and RAF Wroughton. Aircraft Handlers Association. February 29. Aged 62.

Eric Leonard. Ch.Mch. Served 1955-67 in Teazer, Delight, Sultan, Cavalier, Cambrian and instructor at Ganges. March 18. Aged 69.

Kevin 'Tiny' Small. REA1 (Air). Served 1954-69 at RNAS Culdrose and in Ark Royal. April in New Zealand.

John Crick. Air Mechanic (Ordnance) 812 NAS. 1946-47 in Theseus. 14th Carrier Air Group Association, Holton-le-Clay. April 5.

Eric Rutter. Aircraft Handler. Served in Glory (Korea) 1951. 14th Carrier Air Group Association, Croydon. April 13.

Brian 'Butch' Gamblin. NA1 AH3. Served in Bulwark, Eagle, Hermes and Victorious also RNAS Culdrose, Yeovilton, Gamecock, Siskin, Goldcrest and Boscombe Down. Member of the Fleet Air Arm Field Gun Crew 1961 when the fastest time trophy was won; also crew member in 1965. Aircraft Handlers Association. March 17. Aged 71.

Peter Craker. AB. Served in Peacock 1947-49. HMS Peacock Association. April. Aged 80.

Keith 'Kip' Keppence. Pilot's Mate 804 NAS. Served in 1948-50 Ocean and Glory. 14th Carrier Air Group Association. March 3.

Bernie Collins. AB. Served in Rinaldo and Welcome. Algerines Association. April 16. Aged 79.

Raymond Lane. Sto. 1. Served in Coquette. Algerines Association. April 29. Aged 82.

R E 'Ron' Jones. AB. Served in Crane, Drake, Cook and Orion. HMS Crane Association. April 13. Aged 76.

Ian Moffat. Served in Juno (Chatham), 10th Submarine Squadron including Revenge, Resolution and Repulse. February 18. Aged 54.

G L 'Lennie' Jefferson. Served in Dido and Solebay; Africander, Ganges, Pembroke and Collingwood. April 18 in Sydney.

Martin E Heddington. WO(Sea). Served 1946-86 in St Vincent, Cleopatra, Crispin, Dryad, Chevron, Daedalus, Aberford, Centaur, Ausonia, Miner III, Drake, Dido, Ark Royal, Nelson, Raleigh and Dolphin. March 26. Aged 77.

Tom Brooks. POEM. Served 1960-70 in Blackpool, Nubian and Cleopatra (Borneo). – member of each ship's association; also the Ton-class Association. Died whilst on holiday in Bangkok. Aged 64.

ROYAL NAVAL ASSOCIATION

Frank Hinchliffe. Ldg Signalman. Served 1940-45 in Danae, Jerantut, Tenedos, Newcastle, Westminster and Changi Signal Station (Far East). Newark branch. April 10. Aged 90.

George Herbert Plumb RM. Served 1941-46 in North Africa, Sicily, Italy, Greece, France, Holland and Germany. Thetford branch.

John 'Les' Desmond. Engine room branch. Served 1943-47. Former branch committee member St Helens RNA. Aged 82.

Gordon Roberts RM. Served 1943-47. Assisted in the repatriation of POWs from the Far East Region. St Helens branch. Aged 82.

John Maynard Robinson. Cheshunt branch and kindly donated £1,000 to branch funds. March 30. Aged 87.

Christopher Blanchard. Able Seaman. Served 1946-55. Boy entry Ganges. Norwich branch. March 30. Aged 77.

J Frank Attendorf. Yeoman. Served 1941-46 in Hoxa, Samson, Overdale and Wyke. Seaforth branch. April 8. Aged 86.

Robert Eschele. Harlow branch for over 25 years. March.

Thomas E Smedley. Social secretary Harlow branch since 1989; Captains Class Association.

Michael H G Baldwin. POAMO(FAA). Harlow branch and also Essex branch FAA Association. April.

Peter J Walton. War service in Italy, Malta and Russian Convoys; served in Troubridge, Harrier and Byrsa. Colchester branch. April 12. Aged 84.

Joseph Leslie Brown. Stoker Mechanic 1st class. Served 1940-46 in RN Patrol Service. Thurrock branch. April 16. Aged 91.

C A F Lester 'Robbie' Robinson. POAF(E). Served 1945-63 in numerous air stations and in aircraft carriers including Ganges (Instructor), Royal Arthur, Heron, Gamecock, Indomitable, Theseus and Victory. Chelmsford, Essex branch RNA; HMS Ganges Association and former member of Cotswood Fleet Air Arm Association. April 20.

Joyce Mary Colbert. Leading Wren Air

NOTICEBOARD ENTRIES

■ Notices for this page should be brief, clearly written or typed and addressed to – The Editor, Navy News, HMS Nelson, Portsmouth. PO1 3HH or email: edit@navynews.co.uk. If you are sending your notice in via email, please include your full address and telephone number.

■ Reunions appear in date order, and requests to place an entry in a particular edition cannot be guaranteed.

■ Please send in Reunions at least three months (preferably four) before the month of the event.

■ There may be a delay before items appear, due to the volume of requests.

■ Entries are free to non-commercial organisations. Items pertaining to commercial work, books and publications for profit can only appear as paid-for advertising.

■ The Editor reserves the right to edit or refuse publication of submitted notices.

■ Space does not allow us to accept more than one free insert. Any subsequent notice will have to be paid for at advertising rates.

Entries for the Deaths' column and Swap Drafts in July's Noticeboard must be received by **June 11**

Time of your lives can be found on page 40 this month

Reunions

JULY 2008
Devonport Field Gun Association: Reunion weekend Friday, 4th July 2008 - Saturday and Sunday. Contact Paula Garnham at paula953@tiscali.co.uk or tel: 01803 322320. New memberships are welcome.

The D-Boats Association: Reunion in the WO, SR & SNCOs Mess, HMS Nelson, Portsmouth on July 5-6. If you would like to attend or require more information about the association, contact Mike Smith, at dboats@tiscali.co.uk or tel: 01553 765530 or write to 206 Main Road, Clechwarton, Kings Lynn, Norfolk, PE34 4AA.

MASU Reunion takes place at the Thornegate Hall, Gosport on July 17. For more details contact Mark Landless at landless@fs-masu.mod.uk or tel: 023 9254 4567.

September 2008
RNA Isle of Sheppey: A band concert and parade of standards, the proceeds of which will go to Headley Court Rehabilitation Centre, will take place on September 6 at Sheerness East, Working Men's Club from 1400 to approx 2000. Music by the Snowdon Colliery Welfare Band and Whitstable Sea Cadets. Contact Mick Withington at mickRNA0603@aol.com or tel: 01795 875084.

Sea Harrier Reunion and Memorial
RNAS Yeovilton: A Sea Harrier reunion and memorial dinner will take place in the Warrant Officers and Senior Rates Mess at RNAS Yeovilton on September 13. Tickets £45 per head for four-course dinner inclusive of wine and port. Further details available from Lewie Lewis or Tom Dawson on 01935 455421 or 01935 702017 respectively.

HMS Renown 1939-48 Association: Reunion takes place at the Holiday Inn, Plymouth from September 20 to 28, tel: 01752 639988. Contact John Roche, 71 Glenholme Road, Plymouth, PL6 7JD or tel: 01752 775926.

OCTOBER 2008

HMS Caprice (1968) Association: Annual Reunion Dinner for 2008 at the Redwood Hotel and Country Club, Bristol on October 3-4 with reunion dinner. If you were aboard HMS Caprice during her memorable world cruise 40 years ago in 1968, and are not already a member of our 75-strong association, why not join us and meet some of your old shipmates? Contact Graham Latter at g@latter.karoo.co.uk or see the website: www.hmscaprice1968.org.uk or tel/fax: 01482 632276.

HMS Vanguard (battleship): Reunion at the Norbreck Castle Hotel, Blackpool, (tel: 01253 352341) from October 3 to 6. You can book for two or three nights. Book early and mention Vanguard. All ex-shipmates from any commission are welcome. Information from Dr Scrivener, 70 Beach Road, Fleetwood, FY7 8PN.

The Ton Class Association (coastal

Ask Jack

Sub Lt Richard Catlin Scriminger RNR: Richard died aged 22, on February 13, 1945, when his Corsair JS590 crashed during a dogfighting exercise into a field near Charlton Charlton, Essex branch. Aged 71.

H M 'Bert' Cozens. L'Sea SG(C). Served 1957-61 in Auringa. Essex branch. Aged 71.

T 'Tom' Mulloy DSM. L/Cook. Served 1942-46 in Otway and Tantalus. Hull branch. Aged 88.

F 'Frank' Sanderson. PO SM. Served 1948-54 in Alcide, Acheron and Artful. Poole and District branch. Aged 78.

LST & LANDING CRAFT ASSOCIATION

C Andrews. Served LCT(A) 709 and LCT 886. December 31.

R G Kyle. Served LST 161. January 1.

R Harrison. Served LST 3025, HMS Bruiser January 5.

R E Jones. Served LCG(L) 811 and LCT 521.

C A Howe. Served LBW 18 and LCI(L) 118. March 9.

A H Pannell. Served at Chinkara. March 14.

B T B Purves. Served LCTs 749 and 1058. April 16.

D J T Channell. Served LSTs 200 and 237. April 17.

G J Grant. Served LSI(L) Empire Arquebus, Empire Cutlass and Glenearn. April 17.

HMS UNICORN ASSOCIATION

Ty Peter Galbraith King RNVR. Served in Unicorn 1945-46. March 21. Aged 87.

Robert 'Bob' Charles Dore. St Vincent Boy and served 1936-65. Leading Signalman then Yeoman in Unicorn 1943-46; also Capetown, Gloucester, Falmouth, Peterhead, Drake (RPO, 1947), Lochinvar, Raleigh, Illustrious, Jupiter (MAA), Ocean, Tamar, Seahawk and finally Collingwood. May 2. Aged 87.

Cross. Contact James Murphy on 01992 638551.

HMS Excellent: 'Big John' has just started to build a website of HMS Excellent. He is looking for photographs that could be used on the site. If you can help, contact John Bryant at hms_excellent@msn.com or visit the website: www.hms-excellent.co.uk or tel: 0117 947 0122.

HMS Torbay: Looking for any submariners that may have served with George W Hawkins PO LTO, 1942-1946 in Torbay H43, Oberon or Tiptoe. Any information will be really helpful. Contact John Vant at johnandsheila21@tiscali.co.uk or tel: 01580 762194.

HMS Vidette/HMS Lawford: Seeking shipmates of Charles 'Taffy' Morgan RNR, who served in Vidette 1939-42, Lawford 1943-44 and Phante 1944-45. His son Geoff has almost a full set of his father's daily diaries. The only part missing is from December 1943 to June 1944 when they went down with the Lawford off Jutland Beach. Not only would Geoff like to be able to fill in the gaps, the diaries may also help other families whose relatives were on these ships. If any of these ships hold reunions, Geoff would like to know. Contact Geoff Morgan at geoff_morgan@mac.com or write to Apartment Green 1A, Los Gazules, Avenida Almenara, Sotogrande, Cadiz, 11310, Spain.

HMS Centaur: Michael has a copy of

HMS Centaur commissioning book dated

January 1961 to May 1963. Anyone wanting

this book should contact Mickey Dunne at michael.dunne@ntlworld.com or tel:

minesweepers and their auxiliaries): Annual reunion and AGM, from October 10 to 13 at the Trecarn Hotel, Babbacombe. All members welcome, contact Peter Harrison, at peterharrison@eclipse.co.uk or write to Foxhollow, Shevioke, Torpoint, Cornwall, PL11 3EL, tel: 01503 230216. Not a member, then get in touch with Dennis Cook, the membership secretary, at denniscook@fsmail.net, tel: 01909 481745 or write to 5 Manvers Street, Worksop, Notts, S80 1SD.

HMS Naiad: A reunion for ex-ship's company will be held at the Queens Hotel, Southsea from October 31 to November 2. For the full itinerary see the website at <http://www.hmsnaiad.co.uk> or contact Paul Gower at reunion@hmsnaiad.co.uk or tel: 01423 685861.

HMS Ganges 'Friday While '08': will be held October 31 'While' November 3 at the Savoy Hotel, Bournemouth. This year's 'theme' is 'Shotley, November 1918 - 90 years on'. All Ganges/Shotley Boys and their ladies are welcome. Formal dinner on the Saturday. Prices and booking forms from Liz MacLeod, 180 Weston Street, Portland DT5 2DH, tel: 01305 862221 or email: seawife@biscuit@onetel.com or HMS Ganges website.

NOVEMBER 2008

Hove Sea Cadets: The Ex Hove Sea Cadets Association formed in 2007 is planning a reunion in November 2008. If you would like more details of the association or the reunion, please contact the membership secretary, Paul Heward at exhove_seacadets@hotmail.co.uk or write to 3 Downland Close, Southwick, West Sussex, BN4 5QR.

HMS Sirius, F40, 66-93: All Dogstars will be required to muster in Guzz on November 1. Details will soon be available at <http://www.hms-sirius.info> or from Andy Ayres at 253-cpouw@a.dii.mod.uk or write to Andy Ayres at HMS Chatham, BFPO 253.

SD Commanders: The next annual SD Commanders Ladies Night Dinner will take place aboard HMS Victory at Portsmouth on November 21. For further information please view <http://www.sd-commanders.org.uk>, email: sd-commanders@hornsailingclub.org.uk or telephone Tony Dyer: 07767 645512.

HMS Collingwood, 144 Mess: A reunion is being planned for those who joined up on November 17, 1959 in 144 Mess, HMS Collingwood: Taff Edwards, Brian Gulliford, Tony Simmonds, Andre Kilowski, Beans Salmon, Willy Howe, Tweeny Cope, Glyn Alcock, John Paterson, Skers Greenough, M Philippard, Jock Watt, Jock Paul, Gerry Stead, Hugh Crosby and Brian Hoare. Taff Davies is already in contact with Don Morrison. For more information Contact John 'Taff' Davies at jcadavies@btinternet.com or tel: 01329 828543.

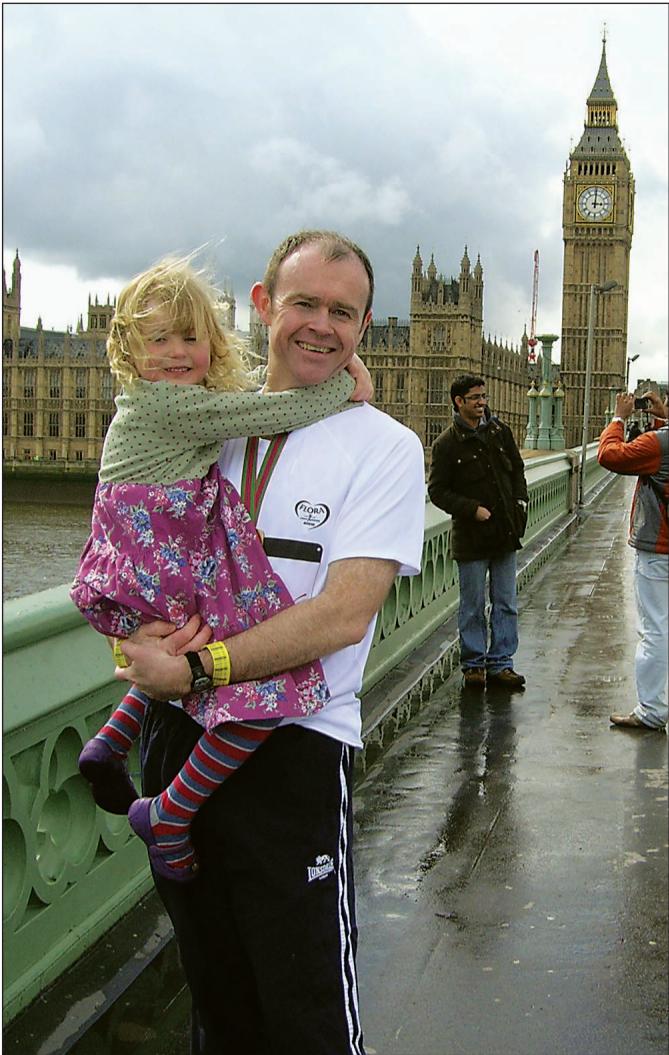
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● Runner Lt Mark Coyle RNR is congratulated at the end of the London Marathon by his daughter

A marathon dreamer

AS AN unusual celebration of ten years in Reservist unit HMS Calliope and 25 years in the rail industry, Lt Mark Coyle decided to tackle his first full marathon this year.

The mine warfare specialist was congratulated by his daughter at the finish line after a sprint down the Mall for beating his four hour target with a time of 3 hours, 57 minutes, and 21 seconds.

To date he has raised £1,400 for the Dreams Come True charity that fulfills the dreams of terminally and seriously ill children.

You can still pledge your support through www.justgiving.com/markcoyle1964



● Royal Marines Mne Patrick Goddard and L/Cpl Joe Hogan with Joe Clapson prepare for their Climb Commando challenge

Across the Alps on foot

FOUR friends have joined forces to take on the Climb Commando challenge, scaling two of Western Europe's higher peaks in aid of a cystic fibrosis charity.

Royal Marines L/Cpl Joe Hogan and Mne Patrick Goddard will be joined by Joe Clapson and Ed Cooper in their efforts to raise money for the CF Trust.

Joe Hogan, whose brother suffers with the debilitating condition, said: "When we decided to raise money for the CF Trust we wanted a truly mountainous challenge."

"We thought running across the Alps and climbing Mont Blanc and the Monte Rosa would do the trick."

"We just hope we can raise as much money as possible for a cause which is very close to our hearts."

The four friends aim to raise £10,000 by conquering two peaks of 4,810m and 4,634m, and running, walking and climbing the 160km between the two.

Polar explorer Sir Ranulph Fiennes has agreed to be the patron of the Climb Commando expedition.

The CF Trust is the UK's only national charity dedicated to cystic fibrosis, and is committed to improving the lives of people with the condition and raise the profile.

You can support their efforts through www.justgiving.com/climbcommando

Oh Mr Sandmen, bring me suncream...

THE Marathon des Sables, described as the 'toughest footrace on earth', has the sort of reputation that is bound to bring out the Navy...

Covering 246km of Moroccan Sahara over seven days in temperatures of up to 50°C, with competitors carrying all they need for the week, it does call upon a certain type of military madness.

The Royal Marine Doctors Team – Surg Lt Dave Potter, Maj Tony Lancashire RM, Surg Lt Steve Gokhale and Surg Lt Cdr Andy Brown – managed to be the second British team past the finishing post.

The sun-drenched four managed to pull in over £3,000 of sponsorship money for Help for Heroes, the Devon Air Ambulance, and a local Moroccan charity Facing Africa.

But it's not just the fresh-faced and still serving who are drawn to such acts of euphemistic 'challenge'.

Naval veterans Mick Monaghan and Martyn Webb, aged 58 and 62 respectively, (pictured right) also pulled on their sandboots to complete the course for St Dunstan's, the charity that provides lifelong support and rehabilitation to blind ex-Service men and women.

Mick said: "We trained for six months in order to be in peak physical fitness for the race, but nothing can prepare you for the conditions you face and the mental and physical exertion involved.

"It was the toughest thing I have ever done."

Martyn added: "Camaraderie with the other competitors really kept us going, as well as knowing that we were raising money to help St Dunstan's and the work they do."

The two men raised £13,626 for the charity.



● The Royal Marine Doctors team on the Marathon des Sables, comprising Surg Lt Dave Potter, Maj Tony Lancashire RM, Surg Lt Steve Gokhale and Surg Lt Cdr Andy Brown



Raleigh brings back the wooden ship

A FIVE-a-side football tournament at HMS Raleigh is the initial fundraiser for Torpoint Infant School's bid to build a wooden ship in their school grounds.

A total of 12 teams of trainee sailors took part, paying a fee to enter and donating loose change to raise over £115 for the school's ship project.

Torpoint Infant School has been working with Touchwood Enterprises, an organisation that helps to educate children about woodwork.

The children's ambition for a wooden ship for their playground

comes with a price tag of £5,000 – and HMS Raleigh has helped them take the first steps along that path.

Headteacher Elisabeth Carney-Haworth said: "The children came up with the idea for the wooden ship, which will be used to enrich our outdoor learning environment.

"They have been fully involved in the design and will also be able to take part in the building of the ship."

The school hopes to have all completed all the necessary fundraising this summer.



Out of the cold

FORMER Royal Marine David Leaning has returned from the snow fields of Norway, having spent four months skiing the 1,625-mile length of the country.

With temperatures dropping down to -35°C, David suffered several injuries en route, but nothing to daunt him from his determined journey – not even when his ski boots fell apart...

At the end of his lengthy trip, David was met by his father 'Spud' Leaning, himself a former commando and Olympic biathlete.

His efforts were to raise money for the Mines Advisory Group, which works in Angola, Cambodia, Iraq and Vietnam: www.skinnorway.org.uk

Fundraising is a backward step

VISITORS to the Brighton seafront in April may have been somewhat bemused by the sight of a Whoopee Cushion, Gorilla and Seagull (among others) walking backwards beside the seaside...

These unlikely promenaders were, in fact, the enthusiastic folk of the Sussex University Royal Naval Unit (URNU) in the midst of their 3.5-mile sponsored backwards-walk from Hove to Brighton Marina.

Mid Hamish Maxwell – a 'glitterbandit' – said: "For once, one step forwards and two steps back paid off!" While Officer Cadet Tom Meineck – The Hulk – enjoyed the opportunity to glean a few sneaky prints along the way.

S/Mid 'Sparks' Downing – who paired up with his commanding officer Lt Si Latus as '118 men' – added: "It was a thoroughly enjoyable day with some fantastic costumes making appearances. Blessed by good weather and the generosity of the Brighton public, the walk was a monumental success."

The earnest URNU fundraisers (pictured above in all their glory) managed to garner from sponsorship and collections £720 for the Newhaven RNLI, the unit's affiliated charity.

Escape from MOD

THE doors of MOD Main Building will be bursting apart as Service men and women flee to the hills – this is the result of no threat, but a fundraising exploit.

'Escape from MOD', which takes place as *Navy News* goes to press, will send five teams of two military personnel, off into the wilderness to travel as far as possible from MOD... but then head back again.

The teams from the Joint Services Administration unit in London are limited by British borders and a budget of just £10.

And all raising money for the Mary Rose School in Portsmouth and Help for Heroes.

Logs(Pers) Anna Hammersley explained: "I myself have been to Headley Court for a period of rehab, and they are fantastic. I fully agree with the need for a new gym and swimming pool."

"Also some of our unit's personnel have had family spend time at Headley Court and want to show their appreciation."

She added: "The Mary Rose School is very close to the heart of WO1 Andy Rutt.

"He comes from Portsmouth and his wife works at the school."

"It's a school for pupils aged between two and 19 years with a wide range of severe and complex learning needs."

"They are currently raising money for a sensory garden and it is hoped that we can support them with this."

The MOD escapees include: Cpl Tarsha Holness (Army), LLogs(Pers) Jon Ryder RN, WO2 Rick Marriott (Army), LCpl Bill Whyman (Army), WO1 Andy Rutt (Army), PO(Logs) (Pers) Gary Hammell RN, Sgt Sally Brown (Army), Sgt Martin Hollow (RAF), Lt Tom Shaves RN and Cpl Julian Fagan (Army).

If you would like to support them, write to:

Charity Team
JSAU(L)
Horseguards
Whitehall
London SW1A 2AX

Talented ship gives back to Guz

FRIGATE HMS Northumberland set up its own version of TV's *Britain's got Talent* as one of its fundraising efforts during its recent NATO deployment.

In the midst of a busy deployment, many of the ship's company found time to take part in events as diverse as flightdeck horse-racing, bingo and the eponymous Northumberland has Talent.

Their efforts raised hundreds of pounds for charity, including £270 for the Dartmoor Search and Rescue Team in Plymouth.

Commanding officer Cdr Martin Simpson said: "I am very proud of the ship's company in HMS Northumberland and the remarkable team effort that was witnessed throughout the recent deployment to raise funds for many charities."

Cheery Chid's charity

THERE'S a slight hint of family focus on board minehunter HMS Chiddingfold in the Northern Arabian Gulf.

PO(MW) Antony 'Pinta' Beer is leading the way with charity fundraising on board with projects such as beard-growing, canteen-collections, and pen-balancing (*don't ask - Ed*).

Although only a small ship, those on board have already raised almost £1,000 for the ship's two chosen charities – Macmillans (which helped Pinta's aunt and grandmother with their battles with cancer) and Blake's midwife unit at Gosport's War Memorial Hospital (where Pinta's son was born). (*Does that make him Halfa Pinta? - Ed*)

Chocolate at Excellent

A LADIES' charity night at the WOs, Senior Rates and Sgts' Mess at HMS Excellent raised £1,695 for the Rowans Hospice in Purbrook.

The night included a catwalk of Service personnel in various outfits – apparently the show was stolen by the Tri-Service Hot Chocolate Dance Troop at the end of the night.



Dog tired

THE luxury of a Sunday morning lie-in was a big lure for fundraising trainee sailors at HMS Raleigh.

The penultimate week of their nine-week training course offers them one chance to break from their usual 5.45am wake up call.

They can lie in bed for as long as they like – provided they make a donation to the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association.

Each class of the upcoming Fisgard Division gets this tempting offer, which is enthusiastically received.

However by the time the trainees get to enjoy their lie-in, their body-clocks are so well adjusted that they're invariably out of bed by 9am...

The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association has been Fisgard Division's adopted charity for over 50 years.

Pam Gratton and Pat Reed from the charity, with guide dog Zorbee and trainee puppy Brooke, recently visited Raleigh in Cornwall to collect the latest donation of £1,000.

● Trainee sailor Sarah Denning with 12-week-old trainee guide dog Brooke

18 leagues under the sea

BUT as in Jules Verne's original, this is length not depth when submariner CPOET(MESM) Steven 'Tom' Petty of HMS Tireless took on the challenge of rowing 100km (or 18 leagues) to fundraise for the Royal National Institute for Blind People (RNIB).

Tom's original ambitions were as simple as a T-shirt, seeking the Concept Rower Million Metres shirt.

However, once word spread of his quest, the 100km Row Charity Challenge was set up, and the RNIB chosen as a charity close to Tom's heart.

Lt Paul Carlton explained: "Tom's eldest son Morgan was born with cataracts in both eyes. At 13 weeks Morgan underwent surgery to remove the cataracts and have the lenses replaced in both eyes."

The RNIB offered support throughout this time and have continued to help him throughout his education.

Lt Carlton added: "In preparation for the row, Tom's training was confined to the silent hours, due to the popularity of the fitness equipment.

"Supplied with copious amounts of water and powered by Skittles and Haribo sweets, Tom hunkered down in the confined and unpleasant surroundings of the Tireless switchboard room and set to the task.

"The room had an average temperature of 24°C during the row, and the elbow room available to Tom was limited to an extremely cramped one metre."

Tom knew the record time was held by a Royal Marine Vincent Brunning at 6 hours, 49 minutes, 54 seconds, and had set himself the marginally more conservative target of 7 hours.

The deep's challenge of tackling 100km (or 54,680 fathoms in submariner-speak) was further hampered by the submarine's depth changes which meant on occasion the sailor was rowing uphill or downhill.

Tom's training regime had only taken him as far as 50km, and he admitted that the stretch from 50 to 64km was the toughest for him.



● CPOET(MESM) 'Tom' Petty rows 100km on board HMS Tireless

"However the regular supporting visits and encouragement from the ship's company gave him the added strength and drive to continue," said Lt Carlton.

"He finished very strongly with an astonishing time of 6 hours, 53 minutes exactly – only three minutes off the record.

"On completion, Tom's biggest ailments were his aching hamstrings, thighs and biceps, as well as considerably blistered hands.

However he remained in the highest of spirits, rightly proud of his achievement."

Tom's efforts have so far gathered over £1,400 of sponsorship from the boat alone, with the total due to be bolstered by friends and family when the submarine returned to Devonport.

And as for that T-shirt – well, at last count, Tom had rowed 860,000 metres. Only a few more sessions to go then...

And another million...

IT'S not just submariner CPO 'Tom' Petty who has his sights set on the One Million Metre row challenge.

Fifteen students from all three Services at the Defence Academy Shrivenham intend to start June with a blast – committing to complete this endurance event over 72 hours, with each participant rowing for 30 minutes in every seven hours, notching up a total of 70km each over the three-day period.

In between their rowing stints, the students will be attending lectures and writing dissertations, before casting pens aside to take up the artificial oar once more.

The focus for their efforts will be the Help for Heroes charity and Macmillan Cancer Support.

It is expected that at least 1,500 spectators will witness the row, that will take place in Shrivenham's large reception hall.

As *Navy News* went to press, arduous training was gaining pace amid the pressures of a demanding course programme.

The team have two web pages set up for those wishing to give donations: www.justgiving.com/jscsc_million_meter_row and www.justgiving.com/jscsc_charity_row_macmillan



● Cpl James Poole – he's faster than a Tellytubby...

See London by ski

ONE year after swearing not to take on the London Marathon again with a stupid challenge, Royal Marine commando Cpl James Poole found himself standing at the starting line wearing ski boots and skis, pulling an 8ft pulk bedecked with a 6ft Corps flag.

So no stupid ideas there then...

It took him ten minutes to ski the 100m to the start-line, which boded well for his prospects in the race.

"After approximately two miles, I realised that this was not such a great idea as the roadclearing machines were starting to catch me up and they had started to pull down the mile marker signs," said James.

"The crowds that were prominent at the start had now wrapped and either gone to the finish, or gone to the pub."

But the commando battled on with his oversize footwear until the ten-mile mark, where the bindings snapped on his skis, catapulting them into a nearby BBC van.

"After much cursing I then picked the useless planks up and had to carry them over my shoulder for the remaining 16 miles – winner."

"However I was gradually pulling my way back up the field, overtaking the 101-year-old and some women on stilts," added James cheerfully.

The race officials by now were trying to reopen the roads and move Cpl Poole on to the

pavement, a suggestion the green beret robustly declined particularly with the kit he was hauling. So he moved into the slow lane with his own personal police escort...

"I was now in sight of Big Ben and the Houses of Parliament, where I knew it was only a short distance up to the Queen's gaff (*that would be Buckingham Palace, then – Ed*) and back down the Mall to the finish line.

"It was now a personal challenge between me and Tinky Winky, Lala, Dipsy and Po into the home straight – and I was 40m up with my pulk swinging from left to right.

"I just managed to hold them off to the finish line, and finished in 7 hours 21 minutes. By no means last, but a tad far behind the winning time of 2 hours, 5 minutes."

The green beret raised a total of £1,326 for the Royal Marines Benevolent Fund, and is keen to thank everyone who sponsored him.

In particular – as he knows that names in print can be a 'catastrophic offence' – he names L/Cpl Jon Cermak, Mne Aron Moon, Mne Tom 'Benny' Hill, Mne David 'Monglebeast' (? – Ed) Welsh, Mne Rob Everson, Mne Lee 'i/c Partymaster' Whitfield, Mne Dale Blackman and Mne 'Kiwi' Kristianson.

As a final note, James adds: "Next year I will run it properly!" We'll believe that when we see it...

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Father attends son's big parade

IT'S not unusual for fathers to watch their sons pass out at Raleigh – but not every Inspecting Officer has his dad on hand to make sure he's doing it right.

When Capt David Elford was invited to inspect the RN's newest recruits, he realised it would be a great opportunity for his father, Graham, to take a trip down memory lane.

Graham, now 77, trained as an artificer apprentice at HMS Fisgard, which used to be opposite Raleigh until it closed in 1983. The name lives on in Fisgard Division, one of Raleigh's new entry training divisions.

Graham was given a tour of the new Fisgard, and he and David also had a look around the RN Submarine School before Graham joined the other families and friends for the parade.

Graham said: "It was a real treat to have been invited back here after 60 years and to such a special occasion. I'd like to express my sincere thanks to all who made the day so special."

Graham, from Plympton, joined the Navy in 1946 and spent the next 24 years going round the world.

He served in nine ships, including two periods in the aircraft carrier HMS Eagle, and left the Navy in 1971 to work at the Royal Naval Armament Depot in Ernesettle, retiring in 1992.

David is an Air Engineering Officer currently serving at the Defence College of Aeronautical Engineering in Cosford.

David said: "It was certainly a privilege and an honour for me to take part in the passing-out parade, and I was very grateful to have been able to bring my father with me to join the other proud friends and families of our newest recruits."

Seven win boat prize

SEVEN sailors from HMS Campbeltown have won a prestigious Herbert Lott Award for their sterling work in keeping the sea-boats going during her deployment protecting the Iraqi oil platforms.

The frigate's two Pacific 22 sea-boats have been central to the ship's success – each needs to operate for several hours every day, carrying eight people laden with weapons, ammunition and communications equipment.

And to make the job harder, environmental conditions in the Gulf mean the boats are operating well beyond what they were designed to do.

The team efficiency award was presented to acknowledge the outstanding teamwork from sailors in the different branches who worked together to make sure the sea-boats were always ready and available.

CPO 'Olly' Campbell said: "It's really nice to get the recognition and know the hard work we have put in is appreciated."

"We've all taken great pride in ensuring the boats were ready for operations at all times."

Emma calls the tune

WITH so many talented young players within its walls, competition is always fierce at the Royal Marines School of Music in Portsmouth.

This year clarinet player Emma Prior beat 40 other musicians to carry off the award for best soloist.

Emma (20) impressed the judges with her performance of two movements from Poulenc's Sonata for clarinet and piano and went on to win the Cassel Prize – the annual solo award.



● Not a case of gold fillings all round – more a case of fledgling submariners collecting the prized emblem of their trade, the dolphins badge. Traditionally the badges, which signify the recipient is a qualified deep, are caught in the teeth from the bottom of a tot of rum – hence the display of gnashers from Swiftsure-class submarine HMS Superb

Military course is launch-pad

A ROYAL Navy aviator has become one of the first graduates from a new, ground-breaking military school.

Lt James Capps, pictured right, was presented with a Foundation degree in military aviation studies from the Open University at the Barbican in London after recently completing operational flying training at RN air station Culdrose in Cornwall.

The innovative Fleet Air Arm (FAA) Military Aviation Academy has successfully combined military flying training and education into a military aviation studies foundation degree, giving academic recognition to the unique skills needed for service in combat aircraft.

The initial degree programme provides budding pilots and observers ('tactical navigators') with the skills, attitude and the knowledge to become fully-trained aviation warfare officers and utilises state-of-the-art simulation and computer-based training (CBT), combined with more practically based tasks when



airborne.

The degree, validated by the Open University, gives students an option of topping up to gain an honours qualification whilst going straight into a frontline Naval Air Squadron.

But the combination of education and military skills does not stop there.

Selected graduates can later move on to a full time masters course at the Defence Academy.

As part of his studies, James will now go on to take his place on the front line with 845 NAS, part of the Commando Helicopter Force, and fly the Sea King Mk 4, used to move troops and their equipment around the battlefield.

After graduating from the University of Leicester with a BSc honours degree in geophysics, James spent some time travelling around Japan and Korea before joining BRNC in January 2003.

"From an early age I'd always wanted to be a pilot but never really thought about the military," explained James.

"But since joining the Navy, I haven't looked back and I've flown at over 600 mph, and qualified on numerous aerobatic aircraft."

"As an airline pilot, you get to see a lot of the world but the flying can be quite dull at times."

"As a Navy pilot, we fly ultra low level in all weather, day or night, over land and sea, and train in a multitude of environments such as the French Alps, where in a few months I will undergo mountain flying and before going on to Norway later in the year for Arctic training."

"The opportunity to obtain a second degree has added another educational string to my bow."



● Andrew Moss and his father Cdr Peter Moss at Muscat

Gathering of Mosses

AS NAVAL Attaché for Muscat, Cdr Peter Moss is used to meeting Royal Navy ships as they sail into the port.

But he was particularly pleased to see HMS Illustrious arrive – because she brought his son, Andrew, to Oman.

Andrew (24) is an air engineering technician on the carrier, where coincidentally his father served as Air Operations

Motorway lifesaver is honoured

PETTY Officer John 'Harry' Demers has been awarded a Commander-in-Chief's Commendation for saving a young girl's life when he stopped on the motorway to help a family last summer.

Harry was travelling home to Warwickshire on the M5 when he noticed the distressed family standing by a car in the outside lane – their 20-month-old daughter had had a choking fit, and was unconscious.

After checking her pulse and breathing and giving her basic first-aid, Harry closed the motorway to get the family across to the hard shoulder and kept an eye on her condition while directing other bystanders to call the emergency services.

The ambulance service confirmed later that the little girl had suffered an obstructed airway, possibly from swallowing her tongue, and this had been cleared by Harry's prompt action in clearing her airway and putting her in the recovery position.

The citation commended Harry's public spirit and prompt actions for saving this little girl's life.

It said: "His professionalism and calming influence throughout this incident are commendable."

Harry, who lives in Nuneaton with his wife Louise and four-year-old son George, left the Navy last month after 22 years service, and hopes to start a second career as a policeman.

Officer in 1997.

Peter said: "It's good to be back on board Lusty, but being here with Andrew is really special."

"It's actually the first time we've ever been photographed together in uniform and I'm very proud."

The carrier has played an important part in the family's history, because it was in Lusty that Andrew got his first taste of life when he joined her in Gib for a Parents and Children at Sea visit.

This was in 1996 and lucky Andrew, who was then 12, was selected for a jackstay transfer.

Strangely enough it didn't put him off Navy life.

"It was a pretty frightening experience when I passed from Lusty to a RFA support vessel, but it was something I will never forget and it was one of the main reasons why I actually joined up," he said.

Andrew, who specialises in maintaining and fixing helicopters, has been with the UK strike carrier since last July and has served on board with USMC, Spanish, Italian and UK Harrier jets.

Transatlantic brothers

TWO RN brothers had the rare chance to meet in the course of duty when HMS Ark Royal visited the USA.

Waiting to greet the ship at the pier in Norfolk, Virginia, was Cdr Bob Mansergh, Deputy Director of the Combined Joint Operations from the Sea, based in the US Second Fleet HQ in Norfolk, Virginia.

And on the bridge was his brother, Capt Mike Mansergh, the Ark's CO.

With the brothers stationed 3,500 miles apart, their paths rarely cross at work.

But their families made the most of their

time together in Virginia, with Mike's wife and children flying over from London to spend time with Bob's family.

The two families visited Busch Gardens Europe, an amusement park in Williamsburg, before heading back to Virginia.

The Mansergh family has a strong naval heritage, with a grandfather and great uncle who were both admirals, and a father who retired as a captain.

The family tradition continues to the present day and even stretches to a cousin who is serving with the Royal Marines.

Specialist pay takes a dive

MY son is a 25-year-old RN Mine Clearance Diver. He joined the service in 2001 after successfully completing rigorous and challenging training to the highest professional military standards as one of the youngest divers at just 19.

For the next six years he served in many countries including the Gulf, enjoying teamwork, comradeship and the 'can do' attitude which is an integral part of the elite Diving Branch.

Last September he decided that he would like to move to commercial diving and submitted his statutory one-year termination notice.

His superiors were disappointed that he wished to leave and informed him that he would have been a guaranteed candidate for promotion.

I am sure you are aware

there are certain roles in the Royal Navy which, because of their nature, qualify for specialist pay. These include submariners, aircrew and mine clearance divers.

He was informed that he would forfeit all his specialist pay for the last six months of his employment because he'd submitted his notice to leave.

My son, along with his unit, flew out to the Gulf two weeks ago on a special assignment which will see him and his colleagues working in a highly dangerous environment.

On this assignment my son will be carrying out the same demanding and hazardous duties as his mates and I know he will not shirk his responsibilities to them, the unit and the Royal Navy, but he will be earning £10 per day less than they will.

Does this seem fair when he is literally putting his life at risk every day?

I know I cannot challenge the power of the MOD, and my son with many other loyal and dedicated service personnel will lose their pay, but I would suggest the RN Careers website should highlight this questionable practice so that prospective applicants are made fully aware of a potential salary reduction before they consider joining.

I am saddened that this appears to be an example of contempt towards a group of our specialist service people who are being penalised simply for leaving the RN after giving loyal and dedicated service to their Queen and country.

– **Gary Taw**, Cosham, Hants

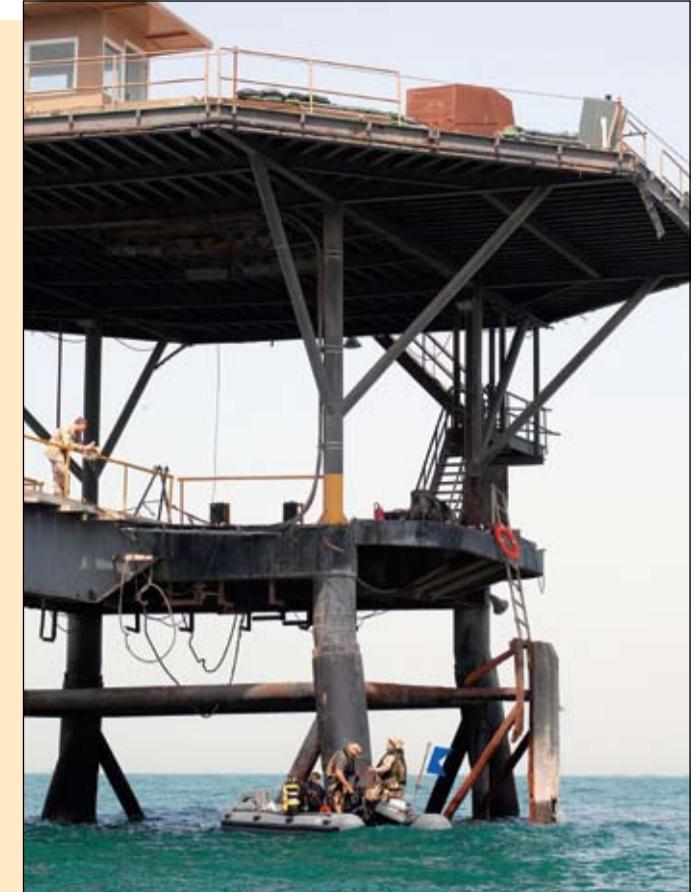
The following guidance on specialist pay was provided

by Fleet Headquarters: Diving Pay is one of a broad range of Specialist Pay (SP) which apply to all three Services and which are approved independently by the Armed Forces Pay Review Body (AFPRB).

It was last reviewed in 2004, with the main conclusion being that SP is an extra payment for certain jobs where there are recruiting and retention difficulties. It is not danger pay, risk money or knowledge/skills reward.

The review went on to recommend that all forms of SP should be reduced for individuals who submit notice for early release, as the retention element of SP will have failed.

Individuals continue to receive SP, but reduced by 50 per cent, until leaving the Service. This applies to all forms of SP and across all three Services.



Picture: LA(Phot) Chris Winter

Seamen must be team-men

SOME sympathy can be accorded to Leading Seaman Gferer (*Letters*, May).

When I was promoted leading hand in 1949 at the age of 21 I was over the moon with my rank. I had some status at work even with an overbearing of artificers but more so, I was the Killick of my mess.

I felt it was well run and often we used to win the 'cake' for captain's rounds.

One of my main duties was to oversee the issue of rum which if there was any misdemouran I was responsible and could easily lose my rank. Incidentally, it taught me how to hold my liquor.

After early promotion to sub lieutenant and throughout my 30 years as an officer I observed the demise of the leading rate stemming in my opinion from the loss of the tot.

Also at work there was an overbearing for him of chief petty officer rates in the artificer branches now redressed.

Much credence has been put on the warrant officer rank in recent years, possibly at the behest of other reforms.

In the beginning it was found difficult to find jobs for them, now they are employed on what used to be junior officer jobs, causing that cadre little chance to ease into their career.

We have seen the removal of the acting sub lieutenant and the ordinary seaman rate, why not go one step further and do away with the leading rate, substituting him with the rank of sub (or 2nd class) petty officer?

This would give him more status as an NCO as with the Army's corporal and he would fit more overtly with the Navy's rank structure.

Finally, Nelson did not have leading hands, or lieutenant commanders, only ordinary seamen, able seamen and petty officers. Warrant officers in those days had higher qualifications as surgeons, etc.

Now here's a topic for debate!
– 'Icarus' (name and address supplied)

...AS the Deputy Fleet Seaman Officer, I feel the need to clarify a few issues raised by LS(Sea) Gferer

I fully understand and have experienced the pride that he

felt when he passed his Leading Seaman's Specialist course and joined the fleet in a role that has always been accepted as vital to any ship.

What I believe he has forgotten is that we as Seaman Specialists pride ourselves as being whole ship ratings, working alongside many other ranks and rates that are just as important to the effective and efficient day-to-day running of the ship.

Included within that cadre were the Radio Operator (Tactical)/Operator Mechanic (Communications) who also prided themselves (and rightly so) as vital elements of the unit.

PCP/Branch development has brought together these two branches, which over the past two years have worked extremely hard and, through a process of give and take, have overcome many difficult challenges.

At the centre of this was the retraining of many personnel in both Seafarership and Tactical Communication skills.

This phenomenal task has been successful due to the adaptability of our young people and their willingness to learn.

LS(Sea) Gferer, upon successful completion of his Tactical Communications Transition training, will again find himself a key member of any ship's company as part of a new, young but rapidly maturing branch, which is key to maintaining the operational capability of the Fleet.

As a member of this multi-skilled branch, he will still be trained and required to drive the ships' boats, he will also find himself i/c of all seamanship evolutions including replenishment, boat lowering and part of ship at Harbour Stations, on top of this, he will also deliver tactical communications to the Command – although not all at the same time!

Finally he will find himself in the most important role of his career, the one as mentor to his subordinates, ensuring the high standards that he obviously aspires to are passed on to the future generations of Seaman Specialist.

– **WO1(Sea) Stu Oliver**, Deputy Fleet Seaman Officer, CinC Fleet Headquarters, Portsmouth

It's got to be York...

THE cruiser in the photograph (*Letters*, May) is, without any possible doubt, HMS York.

The bridge structure is quite distinctive, and the number of platforms and extensions in the bridgework is totally different from her slightly later half-sister Exeter.

York was the last cruiser to have such bridgework, which followed a similar pattern to the earlier 'counties' and suffered much adverse comment, being subject to strong draughts.

Exeter, and all subsequent cruisers, had a more solid-looking streamlined bridge.

Also unique to York, and clear in the photo, are the two sloping funnels. Exeter had a similar funnel layout, but hers were upright.

Finally, the camouflage pattern is identical to that shown on a photograph of the starboard side of York on p267 of *British Cruisers of World War Two* by Raven and Roberts, and dated to late 1940/early 1941.

York was crippled in Suda Bay on March 26 1941 by an Italian explosive motor boat. She was beached, and abandoned on May 22 1941 after bombing by German aircraft, and subsequently salvaged for scrap in 1951-52.

– **Geoff Hewitt**, Penwortham, Preston

...THE ship is HMS Exeter, if as S/M Whelan states it is not York.

– **Gordon Peters**, Cape, South Africa

...THE ship is HMS York. She can be identified by the twin 8-inch turrets, her high 'pagoda-like' bridge and the destroyer-like break in her hull.

She was the sister to HMS Exeter of Battle of the River Plate fame.

She became a constructive total



loss in 1941 after being attacked in Suda Bay, Crete, by an Italian torpedo boat and aircraft.

The wreck was scrapped in the early 1950s.

– **Ian Richardson**, High Shincliffe, Durham

...SHE is definitely HMS York, there were only two ships of that class, York and Exeter, and although sister ships they had distinctly different bridge structures.

The ship in the picture matches York, also the camouflage scheme is identical to a photo of York in Alexandria in 1941 just prior to her loss in the Greek campaign.

I would like to thank you very much for the article about the Palestine Blockade, a friend of mine, now sadly passed away, served in Chelmsford at that time and formed part of the boarding party for President Warfield/Exodus and was at her helm when she entered Haifa.

– **Chris Quirk**, Muirend, Glasgow

...SHE is clearly Exeter before

her pole masts were replaced by tripods, though a near sister of York she was in fact a one-off.

– **Bill Thompson**, Hartlepool

...WITHOUT any shadow of doubt she is HMS York, based upon her bridgework's configuration, tall pole-masts, extended hull plating amidships aft to her deck-mounted torpedo tubes as well as her funnel arrangement with the slightest of rakes just visible, making her unique for identification.

Thank you for a most enjoyable exercise!

– **Dudley Mills**, Northwick, Worcester

...SHE is definitely York, in spite of Mr Whelan's belief to the contrary.

The temptation is to suggest that it is her near-sister, HMS Exeter, which had vertical, as opposed to raked, masts and funnels.

However, Exeter's bridge structure was quite different.

HMS Emerald and her sister, Enterprise, had three funnels and can therefore be discounted, as can the C and D-class cruisers

which had two much shorter funnels.

– **Mike Alston**, Maidenhead, Berks

...SHE is York, taken during World War 2, and could be identified from her sister Exeter in that the latter had tripod masts (fitted after the Battle of the River Plate) and a different bridge structure.

The camouflage scheme shown in the photo is identical to that which York was wearing when she was lost at Suda Bay in 1941. (See Imperial War Museum photo MH 3878.)

– **A J Smythe**, Rayleigh, Essex

...YORK without a doubt – I would stake my life on it.

As for not being in *Jane's*, S/M Whelan is looking at the wrong copy, as it is as clear as daylight on p45 of my 1939 copy.

As for being Emerald, she had two single 6-inch shields forward and three funnels, one abaft the mainmast.

I hope this clears up S/M Whelan's dilemma.

– **S/M Mike Ross**, Horsham Branch RNA, Yapton, Arundel, West Sussex

...IT looks exactly like HMS York, who was distinct even from her only sister, HMS Exeter.

While both ships had two funnels (of different sizes) and two twin 8-inch turrets forward (and only one aft), there were two strong distinguishing features; York's funnels and masts were more raked than Exeter's – sadly this isn't obvious because of the angle of this photograph, but the bridge structures were radically different.

Exeter had a streamlined bridge whereas York had four obvious turrets, as shown in the photograph.

– **Cdr Patrick Keefe**, Base Executive Officer (BEO) HMS Nelson, Portsmouth

Chefs mustn't be chuffed

LOOKING through your April edition I came across the cumbersome phrase 'Logistician (Catering Services (Preparation))' which apparently is the new designation for a chef.

We hear much talk about bureaucracy but surely this is management-speak gone mad? Who was the numpty at MOD who thought up such a ridiculous definition for a chef? When is Jack ever going to go rushing into the galley just before the chef goes off duty to shout "Wait for me, Logistician (Catering Services (Preparation))!" If he'd had a couple of pints he'd never be able to pronounce it.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the word 'chef' first came into use in England in 1842 to mean the head cook in a large household, because at the

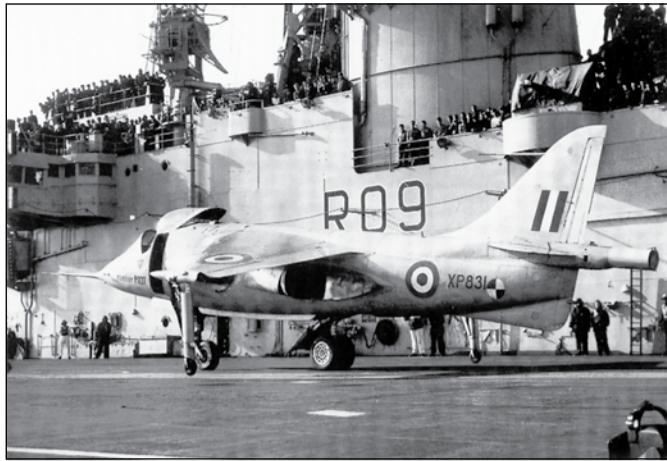
time the owners of large country houses had begun lavishly entertaining and therefore employing such people.

Throughout the English-speaking world today the term 'chef' is immediately recognisable and everyone knows just what kind of person they are talking about.

What could be a more perfect description of the duties of a chef? How did the RN ever come to accept such an unlovely phrase?

I understand that various other trades such as writers and stewards have received similar ridiculous titles. Is there no end to the takeover of the Royal Navy by the bureaucrats?

– **George Thompson**, ex-PO Radio Mechanic (Radar), Northampton



● The landing of the prototype P1127, which later became the Sea Harrier, created quite a stir in HMS Ark Royal in 1963

Photo by courtesy of the Imperial War Museum

Debut debate

THE landing of a Harrier prototype on HMS Bulwark in 1966 was not a first. Three years previously on February 7 1963 P1127 landed on Ark Royal in the English Channel.

The aircraft was piloted by Bill Bedford, a civilian test pilot. Photos are in the commission book for the 1961-64 commission.

— George 'Pincher' Martin, (Quartermaster on that commission) Morecambe, Lancs

...BARRY Lazenbury was not correct – the first landing was on Ark Royal on February 7 1963, while landing trials for Buccaneer were also being undertaken in Lyme Bay.

I think the civilian pilot was senior test pilot Mr Bedford.

— Bob Hufflett

...I SERVED on Ark Royal from 1959 to 1963 and was privileged to witness the first landing of such a successful fighter plane.

I believe that P1127 was featured in a quiz a year or two ago here in Waterford, Ireland.

Questionable use of colour

FOLLOWING your article on L/Cpl Walter Parker RM VC (*Heroes of the Royal Navy*, May) the museum noted that the Victoria Cross was shown with a blue ribbon.

Although when originally issued (and up to August 1918) Victoria Crosses bore crimson ribbons for Army recipients and blue for Navy recipients, crimson became commonplace for all services, following the formation of the RAF in 1918.

Ribbons could be freely changed to crimson at any time by naval VC recipients. As a result, L/Cpl Walter Parker's VC

As a matter of interest, where we hold our Legion meetings here in the Munster Bar in Waterford there is an original photo of motor torpedo boats tied up in Waterford Harbour circa 1905, and another point of interest, the last Royal visit to Ireland was to Waterford in 1904.

— Dominic Dunne, Waterford, Ireland

The Harrier prototype did indeed first land on HMS Ark Royal in 1963.

However, reference books disagree about the date, with HMS Ark Royal IV, Britain's Greatest Warship, giving February 7 and Three Ark Royals by Neil McCart, giving the date of February 8. The ship's log contains the following entries: 13.48 Hawker P1127 approached ship and started flying backwards. 13.51 Hawker P1127 hovered over the ship and landed vertically abreast the island.

Both books agree that it was Bill Bedford, Hawker Siddeley's chief test pilot, who made the historic landing.

has a crimson ribbon, which can be seen at the Royal Marines Museum in Southsea.

Ten VCs have been won by the Royal Marines, and the museum is home to all of them.

They are proudly displayed in our recently refurbished Medal Room, which houses the majority of the museum's collection of 8,400 medals.

For more information and the Medal Room, and the museum in general, visit the website www.royalmarinemuseum.co.uk.

— Sandy Wilson, Marketing Manager, Royal Marines Museum, Southsea, Hants

Speaking loo-sely

Referring to Gordon Thompson's letter (May) one wonders in which Navy he served and when exactly were his 'days'?

Throughout 'my' time – 1942 to 1946 – lieutenants were always *lieutenants* and we were only 'awarded' the *lootenant* pronunciation when we encountered fellow officers in the United States Navy.

— Mike Alston, Maidenhead, Berks

...THE Royal Navy pronunciation is *le*, in the Army *lef* and the term *loo* is for the American forces, any good dictionary will confirm this.

I was in the RN for 42 years and never have I heard officers called *lootenant*.

I cannot comment on the Royal Air Force.

— Alan Clifford, Queen Camel, Somerset

opinion

THE role of the Royal Navy reservist has changed hugely in the last 20 years. Gone are the days when the RNR had its own fleet of 12 minesweepers, manned entirely by reservists. Those ships went in the 1990s and with them the popular tradition of the Naval Reserve as a separate force. Now the policy is integration, and not since the Second World War have the reserve forces been in such demand.

The RNR and Royal Marines Reserves combined have only 2200 members but in the support they offer to current operations they punch well above their weight. Up to 15 per cent of Marine strength in Afghanistan comes from the RMR, while the RNR's Above Water Protection Force has been a

The views expressed in Navy News do not necessarily reflect those of the Ministry of Defence

Reviewing the reservists' role

DEFENCE Secretary Des Browne's review into the Reserve Forces is welcome news for the Royal Naval Reserve.

There is no doubt that the RNR has, in the last decade or so, made great strides in aligning itself with the RN.

Men and women of the RNR have made distinguished contributions to operations in theatres such as the former Yugoslavia, Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as to vital HQ and other support work in the UK.

The recent removal of marks of distinction – the 'R' in the curl for officers, shoulder flashes for ratings – is yet further evidence of this growing integration.

So too is the establishment of the Commodore Maritime Reserves organisation, and the growing role of RN capability managers in administering, training and directing RNR branches and specialisations.

Yet, as Mr Browne's review will surely discover, there is still a considerable way to go.

The *Sunday Times*, anticipating the review, referred unkindly to Reservist 'weekend warriors', those happy to wear the uniform but resistant to stepping outside their cosy drill night comfort zones to work more closely alongside their Regular colleagues or be mobilised for operations.

In reality, there can be few who fit this scathing stereotype. But there is evidence of resistance to change, and in the RNR individuals can be confronted by divided loyalties – between the demands of their RNR unit and the expectations of the RN capability manager.

There is also in some quarters a lingering nostalgia for the days, not so long ago, when the RNR nurtured and guarded its separate corporate identity as a 'club' outside the bounds of the regular RN.

As Mr Browne will find, it is the RNR unit that poses the greatest obstacle to still further integration



● A Reservist on Above Water Force Protection duties in HMS Chiddingfold in the Northern Arabian Gulf

Picture: LA(Phot) Chris Winter

with the RN.

In 1992, transferring across to the RNR after a career in the RN, I was assigned to one such unit and, not unreasonably, I asked about the relationship between an RNR member and his/her unit.

The answer was straightforward: "The task of the reservist is to support his or her unit, and the role of the unit is to support the

reservist."

This appeared to work well enough but, I thought, where in this intimate symbiosis was there room for the RN itself?

Since 1992, as demands for closer integration have become more insistent, RNR units have had to face up to such questions.

Consequently, the *raison d'être* of the unit has been the subject

A carrier fit for a king

WHEREAS I can understand and accept the decision to name the first of our new carriers *Queen Elizabeth*, I remain unconvinced about the second carrier being named *Prince of Wales* (*Letters*, May).

Once the present Queen has passed on, her son will cease to be the Prince of Wales and will become King Charles III. In time, Prince William will no doubt become the next Prince of Wales.

But my main objection to the use of this name is because there is already a Prince of Wales, namely the battleship sunk by the Japanese in 1941 and presently lying at the

bottom of the sea and designated as a war grave.

Nevertheless, in the past, this does not seem to have discouraged the Navy from naming its ships after those previously sunk in action.

The predecessor to HMS Invincible was sunk at the battle of Jutland with heavy loss of life.

HMS Edinburgh's predecessor, loaded with gold, was sunk on her way to Murmansk.

And in recent times, the Navy named a new Type 22 frigate after HMS Sheffield, the Type 42 destroyer sunk in the Falklands War.

However, there appears to be some inconsistency on the part of the Navy. I doubt whether we will ever have another ship called Hood, Barham, or Glorious, because the public should not be reminded about the disastrous naval engagements in which these ships were sunk.

Although I appreciate that the Navy lost many hundreds of ships in two World Wars, I do think that war graves should be respected and alternative names found, rather than perpetuating names from our glorious past.

No Royal Navy warship has ever carried the name *HMS King*

George VI, the Queen's father and a man who, as King, selflessly devoted the last 16 years of his relatively short life to this country. It is high time he was suitably honoured.

So please let us drop the name *Prince of Wales* (for all time) and instead name the second carrier *HMS King George VI*.

Quite apart from any other factor, the name has a much better ring to it than Prince of Wales.

Anyone disagree? I can guarantee that the Queen would approve.

— C J A Cope, Political Editor, *Warship World* magazine, Devon

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BY TUES



Enigma heroes were recognised

THE story on page 22 (May) *Unsung heroes – and campaign – saluted* is a very well written article, and Mr Shanahan deserves credit for bringing Fasson, Grazier and Brown to greater notice.

It is, however, unfortunate, that the tenor of the article suggests that these individuals had not previously been recognised and that the Admiralty had taken no notice of their bravery.

Their bravery, in fact, began to be recognised very shortly after the incident, almost certainly before a full assessment of the value of the information they had obtained.

Recommendations for decorations were submitted by the Commander-in-Chief Mediterranean as early as December 1942 and the 1943 Admiralty papers are now available in the National Archives at Kew under the reference ADM 1/14256 (formerly Admiralty file H&A 161/43): *Enemy submarine U559 destroyed: awards to personnel of HM Ships*.

Lt Francis Anthony Blair Fasson and AB Colin Grazier were both awarded a posthumous George Cross, the highest 'civilian' bravery award that is also available to Service personnel for action not in the face of the enemy. The GC is on a par with the Victoria Cross.

The awards were announced in the *London Gazette* on September 14 1943, LG No 36169, 3rd Supplement to the LG of 10 September 1943,

page 4,073: "For outstanding bravery and steadfast devotion to duty in the face of danger."

The same *London Gazette* announced the award of the George Medal to NAAFI Junior Canteen Assistant Thomas William Brown: "For great bravery and devotion to duty in the face of danger."

Grazier's award was presented to his wife in February 1944, and Fasson's award was presented to his Next of Kin in February 1945.

Fasson had been previously granted a Mention in Dispatches for his service on HMS Hostile during the first Battle of Narvik, in April 1940, announced in the *London Gazette* in June 1940. Brown's award was presented to his mother in July 1945.

It is not clear why the article calls the men "three unsung war heroes" or alludes to a "drive to win international recognition", "the campaign... not only achieved its aim of honouring the men", and "there was a serious wrong here that needed to be righted. These men were denied proper recognition..."

As the above indicates, this was far from the case at the time or now.

The George Cross and the George Medal are not as well known as the Victoria Cross, but the story behind these awards is one of the better known tales of naval bravery during the War, and, of course, takes its place in books about these decorations.

– Naval Honours and Awards Office, Fleet Headquarters, HMS Excellent, Portsmouth

A brush with history

STREAKING across the front page of your May issue is what purports to be a Fleet Air Arm Harrier. To the casual observer, how do we know?

At a time of apparent lack of support from this Government and possibly the general public for the Navy, the time has come for the Senior Service to stop lying down and playing dead.

The picture would have been ten times more effective in helping stem the so-called Sea Blindness among ministers and public alike with the words *Royal Navy* emblazoned across the fin root.

I would dearly love to know how decades of tradition have been wiped out, presumably by some unseen Whitehall mandarins, merely because of the formation of Joint Force Harrier.

I will put out a challenge to any FAA air or ground crew with the balls to do it.

Preferably during a quiet period or within a day of leaving the service, get a



stencil and white or light grey can of spray paint, read my third paragraph again, and I think you know the rest.

If Defence cuts are so bad, I will pay for the paint.

In my book, what the powers that be might call 'criminal damage' is the removal of *Royal Navy* from its attack aircraft.

– Howard Newman, Farnborough, Hants

LETTERS to the editor should always be accompanied by the correspondent's name and address, not necessarily for publication. E-mail correspondents are also requested to provide this information.

Letters cannot be submitted over the telephone.

If you submit a photograph that you did not take yourself, please make sure that you have the permissions for us to publish it.

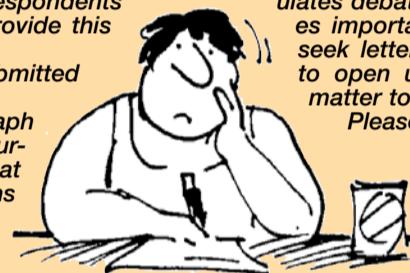
Given the impressive

volume of letters, we cannot publish all of your correspondence in Navy News.

We look for correspondence which stimulates debate, makes us laugh or raises important issues. We particularly seek letters from serving personnel to open up debate on issues that matter to you.

Please try to keep your submissions as brief as possible – our space is limited.

The editor reserves the right to edit your submissions.



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Summer programme for Area 2

AREA 2 has a busy summer programme lined up, starting with a national competition this month.

The National Standard Bearers contest is to be staged at Chatham on Saturday June 7, starting at 2pm and winding up with an awards ceremony at 8pm.

Further details are available from Bill Murray on 01634 304973.

Saturday July 5 sees the Veterans Day hosted by the Historic Dockyard at Chatham between 11am and 7pm.

Beat Retreat will be at 6pm.

The following day brings the Battle of Britain Memorial Day at Capel le Ferne, Folkestone.

A dress rehearsal at 11am will precede the event itself, which will be at 1.15pm.

For further details on this event contact Robin Green on 01622 681665.

Later that month, on Sunday July 20, Maidstone branch hold their Sea Sunday service at 3pm.

Those attending should muster at Aylesford Community Centre, and the man with the details in John Cooper, on 01622 675895.

Finally, on Saturday September 6, the Isle of Sheppey Parade of Standards and band concert will be staged.

Organised by the Isle of Sheppey branch, the event is based at the Sheerness East Working Men's Club, from 3pm until around 8pm.

Music will be provided by the Snowdon Colliery Welfare Band and Whitstable Sea Cadets with a singalong to round off the evening.

Tickets cost £14 per person, to include a full buffet, and proceeds will go to the Headley Court rehabilitation centre.

Details from S/M Mick Withington on 01795 875084, or email mickRNA0603@aol.com

Plea for memorabilia

CHESHUNT branch members and guests joined with shipmates from Edmonton and Enfield to commemorate St George's Day by holding a mess deck supper.

Around 170 people attended the event at the Conservative Club in Waltham Cross, with a fish and chip supper and dancing to the music of Sid Lawrence.

Up Spirits was piped and St George toasted in true Naval style with a tot of rum, and Master-at-Arms S/M Joe Wright supervised the rum bosuns.

As the branch approaches the 20th anniversary of its reformation, PR officer S/M James Murphy is putting together a history of Cheshunt, and would like to hear from anyone who has photos or memorabilia from the Royal Naval Old Comrades Association.

In 1980 they met at the George pub in Cheshunt (otherwise known as the Force and Firkin).

Prior to that the branch was known as Lea Valley in 1955, meeting at the Falcon at Waltham Cross.

Contact S/M James on 01992 638551.

Naval Quirks

MERCHANT SHIPS IN THE LAST WAR HAD TO BE ARMED AGAINST ENEMY AIRCRAFT AS WELL AS HIS U-BOATS..



● Standards are displayed at the New Malden war memorial before the service

VC's name displayed on plaque

A SPECIAL service has been held at New Malden war memorial to mark the unveiling of a plaque which honours a Victoria Cross recipient who had not been inscribed on the memorial in 1924.

The recipient was Lt Humphrey Osbaldston Brooke Firman VC, who was killed in action on the River Tigris in Mesopotamia (now Iraq) on April 24 1918.

The *London Gazette* of February 2 1917 describes how an RN crew under Lt Firman, assisted by Lt Cdr Cowley RNVR, left Falahiyah in the SS *Julnar* at 8pm, carrying 270 tons of supplies in a bid to reach Kut.

She was, however, discovered and shelled on her passage upriver.

At 1am on April 25 it was reported that the *Julnar* had not arrived, and that at midnight a burst of heavy firing had been heard at

Magasis, some nine miles from Kut.

The next day the Air Service reported the *Julnar* in the hands of the Turks – and the leaders of this brave attempt had been reported by the Turks to have been killed.

S/M John Snowden, associate member of Crief and District branch and vice president of the Malden and Coombe branch of the RBL, co-ordinated the event with the help of RNA HQ.

The service was conducted by Chaplain of the Fleet the Ven John Green and a number of VIPs, including Cdr Adrian Nance, deputy president of the RNA, and the Mayor of Kingston-upon-Thames, Cllr Shiraz Mirza.

The Association's national standard was in attendance, as well as the standards and members from local ex-Service associations – all under the eagle eye of RNA National Ceremonial Officer S/M Alan Robinson.

Last attempt to find missing Britannia

AFTER a 25-year search for a silver statuette, a retired Naval officer is making one final attempt to locate the missing trophy before he calls it a day.

Lt Cdr Geoffrey Prall has gathered a file more than two inches thick, containing letters and anecdotes from sailors of all ranks and civilians, many of whom remember the silver statuette of Britannia which once sealed a close relationship between cruiser HMS Norfolk and the Royal Norfolk Regiment.

The search has taken in many locations in the UK and as far afield as Hong Kong, Australia, Canada, Trincomalee and the Andaman Islands.

But none has pointed to the location of the statuette, which was last known of in Devonport Naval Base in 1950.

Its history dates back to 1928 when the 2nd Bn of the Royal Norfolk Regiment was quartered for four years at the South Raglan Barracks in Devonport.

The new cruiser HMS Norfolk was fitting out nearby in 1930, and the geographic link in the names of the two units led to a friendly relationship which was sealed with an exchange of trophies.

The officers of HMS Norfolk presented the regiment with a silver statuette of a sailor in square rig, an item which still travels with the successor unit, the Royal Anglian Regiment.

In return the ship received the silver Britannia – the regiment's crest – which was still on board when she paid off in Devonport in 1950.

Records show that the statuette, along with other trophies, was deposited in the local trophy store to await the commissioning of a new Norfolk.

That happened in 1970, but by the time the County-class destroyer was ready to join the Fleet the trophy had 'walked' – it was not in the store, nor was there any record of it having been issued.

Lt Cdr Prall believes the missing Britannia may be innocently adorning someone's sideboard – though the means by which it originally got there might not have

been so innocent. He is keen to see the trophy back in the Navy's safekeeping before he slips his moorings, so if anyone knows of the item's whereabouts, or discovers they have it on their mantelpiece, please contact him at 16 Suffolk Road, Sudbury, Suffolk, CO10 1UN.

He would also like to hear from anyone who can explain what the

connection is between the Norfolk pub near Colchester station and the old cruiser.

He said the pub sign depicts the warship, and there are plenty of pictures of the ship's peace-time travels inside the bar.

It is too far from the sea to be a sailors' pub – is the link the Royal Norfolk Regiment again, or is there another reason?



● Standards are paraded in Londonderry in remembrance of the Battle of the Atlantic

Atlantic service

LONDONDERRY branch were behind a series of events last month to remember the Battle of the Atlantic.

The programme began on the Saturday afternoon with a cruise down Loch Foyle, during which a buffet lunch was provided by the branch.

At the mouth of the Foyle

a short service was held and a wreath was laid in memory of the many sailors who passed that point but never returned.

On returning ashore there was just enough time to clean up before a dinner dance, at which the guest of honour was Surg Cdr George Gardiner, the Commanding Officer of HMS Caroline, the Belfast RNR unit.

Shipmates were also joined by the Mayor and Mayoress of Londonderry, while those who didn't attend the dinner were entertained at the Services Club.

On the Sunday the shipmates mustered at the Services Club for a parade to All Saints Church, where they were joined by detachments from HM ships Bulwark and Caroline.

The parade was led by the Churchill band.

Rector the Rev Malcolm Ferry conducted the service, and the Lessons were read by Area 12 president Cdr Campbell and chairman S/M William Roulston.

The Act of Remembrance was led by the rector, and a wreath was laid by Londonderry branch chairman S/M Robert Buchanan.

St Nazaire raid heroes honoured

THE daring wartime raid on St Nazaire by HMS Campbelltown is commemorated by a monument near the dock which was due to be used by Nazi warship Tirpitz.

But the France Nord branch is keen for survivors of the ship to know that they have taken on the privilege of attending the memorial annually to remember the victims of the attack.

The raid was sparked by the move through the Kiel Canal to Trondheim by the Tirpitz.

The Admiralty decided that should the battleship break out into the Atlantic then the only dock capable of refitting her was at St Nazaire, which should therefore be put out of action.

Operation Chariot did just that, with the old destroyer being rammed into the dry dock gate on March 27 and the charges exploding the following day.

Five VCs were won in the combined operation, though it cost the lives of around 150 sailors and commandos.

Around 20 French standards joined the France Nord standard at the commemoration ceremony this year, which was held in very wet and windy conditions.

French marines and a French navy and marine band supported the event, which was also attended by the British Naval Attaché in Paris.

Memorial for Quebec

A NEW memorial has been unveiled at the Argyll Holiday Park in memory of the men of Combined Operations who were killed in the World War 2.

The holiday park is at the former home of HMS Quebec, No 1 Combined Training Centre, near Inverary in Scotland.

Some 250,000 personnel passed through the gates of the base between 1940 and 1944, and at times the number of people billeted there could have been as high as 15,000 in a local community of just 500 souls.

The Royal Navy was represented at the unveiling of the memorial by Capt Mark Bawstock of HMS Neptune and Maj Paterson RM from Faslane.

The memorial was unveiled by the Duke of Argyll.

From the first to the latest

THE new president of Uxbridge branch has been presented with his Life Membership certificate by the branch pioneer.

S/M Gerald 'Buster' Brown was handed the prized certificate by S/M Martin Zak, secretary of the branch and Uxbridge's very first Life Member.

S/M Buster has been a member of Uxbridge for some 20 years, holding a number of official positions from committee member through to chairman and vice president.

He took on the role of president in April when S/M Henry Avery crossed the bar.



White Ensign visits Yeovilton

THE President of the White Ensign Association, Cdre Sir Donald Gosling and members of Council and staff have paid a visit to RNAS Yeovilton.

Following a warm welcome and an air station presentation from the Commanding Officer, Cdre Chris Palmer, the visitors were brought up-to-date with the current operations of the Lynx Helicopter Force and Commando Helicopter Force.

These briefings were delivered by Cdr Amphlett and Cdr Fox respectively, and were followed by an extensive programme which allowed council members to see the Fleet Air Arm at work, and to meet and chat with personnel from all areas of the air station.

The tour included visits to Air Traffic Control, 702 Naval Air Squadron, 846 Naval Air Squadron, the Chaplaincy, the Lynx Simulator, the Gymnasium and the new single living accommodation.

The association hosted an all-ranks buffet lunch in the Junior Rates Function Room, giving personnel a further opportunity to discuss their current concerns.

Victorious memories

THREE old shipmates from the last commission of HMS Victorious shared dits in Pompey.

Jim/Bob Reeves, now secretary of the Hull branch, and fellow bunting tosser Gerry Strachan, who now lives in Waynesboro, Pennsylvania, were hosted by former FCCY Dave 'Mo' Morris, who lives in Portsmouth.

It was the first time the trio had met since leaving the ship over 41 years ago, and they spent the weekend swinging the lamp, checking out museums and visiting former establishments.

Sitting down to a welcome cup of tea in the Historic Dockyard, the three were delighted to see the Battle Honours board of their old ship.

£50 PRIZE PUZZLE



THE mystery ship in our April edition (right) was RMAS Mandarin, and her sister was RMAS Pintail – as identified by Peter Nash of Ellesmere Port, who wins our £50 prize.

This month's vessel was launched in 1945 as a Loch but served as a Bay before being sold to Portugal in 1961.

Can you give us both her names before she was sold? We have removed her pennant number from the picture.

Complete the coupon and send it to Mystery Picture, Navy News, HMS Nelson, Portsmouth PO1 3HH. Coupons giving correct answers will go into a prize draw to establish a winner.

MYSTERY PICTURE 160



Closing date for entries is July 11. More than one entry can be submitted, but photocopies cannot be accepted. Do not include anything else in your envelope: no correspondence can be entered into and no entry returned.

The winner will be announced in our August edition. The competition is not open to Navy News employees or their families.

THE HMS Middleton (L74) Association has held its 24th reunion at the RNA Club, Leamington Spa, and although numbers are reducing the organisation can still boast 13 members who served in the ship

between 1941 and 1947. A Sea Cadet piped aboard the ship's original First Lieutenant from 1941-43, Admiral of the Fleet Sir Edward Ashmore.

Admiral Ashmore is the Association's patron.



● The precious flagon of pusser's rum is displayed at the Torrevieja tot night

Rum do in Spain

Almost 100 members and guests attended the annual Torrevieja tot night – but the star of the show was an old bottle of booze.

Not any old bottle, of course.

It was a flagon of original pusser's rum, still safe and sound in its original stone jar with an Admiralty wax seal.

The flagon was donated to the branch by previous chairman S/M

Robin Hargrave – a gesture which was very much appreciated by all present.

The next major ceremonial function for the club, situated in south-eastern Spain, is Trafalgar Night on October 21.

For other social events in the coming months see the club's website at www.torrevieja.jarna.info

Delegates consider eight proposals

DELEGATES look like having a busy day once again when they gather for the National Conference, which this year is being held in Dundee.

Eight branch motions have been accepted by the Standing Orders committee for debate on June 28 – including one which would take a future Conference abroad.

The first motion, proposed by Saltash and seconded by Liskeard, suggests "that the National Council provide an up-to-date statement of progress, including intentions for future action, on the asbestos compensation issue, arising from Motion No 8 at the 2005 Annual Conference."

Motion No 2 returns to a familiar subject from recent conferences.

Peterborough and District, backed by Newbury and District, propose "that the Royal Charter, rules and bye-laws, as appropriate, be amended to allow associate members who have completed at least five years membership of the association to be designated by their branch as the accredited branch delegate, with the power to vote, at area meetings and National Conferences."

The third motion, sent in by Worthing and seconded by Waterlooville, proposes "that Bye-law A16 be amended to read: 'A capitation fee of ten per cent of the subscriptions received in Headquarters by December 31 each year shall be paid to each area in respect of branches within its area.'

On the subject of the proposed move of RNA HQ to Portsmouth, Isle of Sheppey, backed by Maidstone, propose "that vacant positions on the Royal Naval Association Headquarters senior staff be advertised widely in appropriate journals."

The same subject also concerns the fifth motion, from the same branches, which proposes "that the Royal Charter, rules and bye-laws, as appropriate, be amended to provide that decisions on the appointment of Royal Naval Association HQ senior staff be taken by the elected members of the National Council."

Huddersfield chips in with the sixth motion, seconded by Mexborough, "that the Royal

Naval Association represent to the appropriate authorities that suitable inscriptions be added to existing war memorials in recognition of subsequent conflicts involving UK Armed Forces."

West Lothian branch would like to see that the "biennial National Standard Bearers' competitions be held during the appropriate National Conference weekend."

The seconding branch is Inverness.

By tradition, the final branch motion concerns the venue for the next-but-one conference – the 2009 version, as decided last year, will be in Londonderry.

Motion No 8 at Dundee comes from France Nord, seconded by Aquitaine, and proposes "that France Nord host the 2010 National Conference."

See our August edition for full coverage of the National Conference



● Members of the HMS Dunkirk Association unveil a plaque in Sliema marking their visit to Malta

Dunkirk in Malta

MEMBERS of the HMS Dunkirk Association travelled to the Mediterranean for their annual reunion.

The destination for the 20 members and their partners was the George Cross island of Malta, giving the former matelots a chance to reminisce.

During their stay they took a boat tour around the Sliema and Grand Harbour area, which brought back many memories.

But the highlight of their week was a ceremony at Sliema war memorial, where the group unveiled a plaque marking their visit.

Middleton's veteran 13

The inscription states: "This is to commemorate the return visit by members of the HMS Dunkirk Association who spent many years as part of the 7th Destroyer Squadron based in Sliema Creek between 1958 and 1963."

The ceremony was conducted by Rev Jeff Williams, of the local Anglican church, who also joined members of the group for their gala dinner at the hotel.

Jeff had apparently never been addressed as a 'sin bosun' before, but he thought it was a title that he would dine out on for some time.

Wrens ready to flock to York

THE Association of Wrens national reunion is to be held in York on August 22-24.

More than 1,000 members are expected – and serving Royal Navy women are especially welcome.

The reunion hotline is 01489 50226.

If you are not a member – no problem!

Contact 020 7932 0111 or wrensassoc@aol.com, or see website www.wrens.org.uk

Donation revealed as photo archive

SHIPMATES of the Bexhill-on-Sea branch were collecting for Naval charities at Little Common last autumn when one of them was approached by a woman who made a donation.

While talking to the collector outside the Co-op supermarket, the woman mentioned that she had a few photographs of RN ships, and asked if the branch might want them.

The collector said yes and arranged for them to be picked up.

He was more than a little surprised to find that the "few photographs" turned out to be almost 700 – and all had details written on the back.

After some discussion, and with the approval of the donor, they were entered into an auction at the Abbey Auction Galleries, Battle.

At the end of April they sold for £420, which will be forwarded to Naval charities – and thanks from the branch go to the woman, and all who donate to help those who served their country and are now in need.

To Lashkar with love...

BOXES of goodies for front-line troops in Afghanistan and the Gulf have been sent out under an initiative by Liskeard branch.

Shipmates approached the town's Co-op to ask if boxes could be placed out to collect donations from customers.

Those items have now been gathered up to be sent out to the troops.

Among the items included were toothpaste, noodles and jelly babies.

Further boxes will be welcome, and can be sent to Afghanistan at the address HQ Task Force Helmand, Lashkar Gar, BFPO 715 – items under 2kg are free to post.

Chatham is flagship

THE flagship Veterans Day event in the South-East will be hosted by the Historic Dockyard at Chatham.

The event, on July 5, will also be the main public event for the TA100 in the region, marking the centenary of the Territorial Army – although the event will also feature the RNR and RMR.

The programme of events includes a commemorative church service, a veterans parade, and a veterans reunion hall.

The Band of the Royal Marines Portsmouth will be a highlight of the event, featuring in a separately-ticketed Beat Retreat and Ceremonial Sunset, and the modern Armed Forces will also be putting on displays and activities.

LORD'S

THE HOME OF CRICKET

Royal Navy v The Army Centenary Match

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Tuesday 29th July 2008
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Available from

Secretary ACA - Colonel (Retd) Peter Sharland

Telephone 01252 348570 or email aca@ascb.uk.com

Secretary RNCC - Lt Cdr David Cooke RN

Telephone 02392 723741 or email rnso4@a.dii.mod.uk





Site is essential viewing

MOD bases and accommodation are not exempt from TV licensing laws, so Service personnel need a valid TV licence whether living on or off base.

That covers the watching or recording of any TV programmes as they are being broadcast, irrespective of the device being used or how the programmes are received.

Watching TV without a licence means the risk of prosecution and a fine of up to £1,000.

To help Service personnel understand the law, TV Licensing has launched a special web page aimed at the Forces, found at www.tvlicensing.co.uk/army

The page includes a definitive collection of answers to the most frequently-asked questions.

Content includes jargon-free explanations of the law on shared accommodation, temporary residences, watching TV on laptops and non-UK satellite broadcasts.

And for those who wish to claim a refund for any three consecutive month period in which they have not needed a licence, a form is available for download.

The site also offers information on how to pay for the licence, including cash or debit card at any Pay Point outlet, bt Direct Debit, via the website by post or over the phone.

News and information for serving personnel

Pulling out the stops in the hour of need

MILITARY planners are generally good at coping with a crisis – that's their field of expertise, after all.

Whether it be an ever-shifting engagement with the enemy, or the after-effects of a natural disaster, the reaction of the Armed Forces can rarely be bettered.

And this expertise, flexibility and can-do spirit may be called on at any time, as a Royal Marine on exercise in Norway earlier this year found out.

At 2200 one February night, deep in the Arctic Circle, the marine advised his chain of command that he had been told that his mother was very ill and in hospital.

The matter was immediately referred to the compassionate cell at RAF Innsworth, which investigated and categorised the marine as a compassionate case, category A.

At 2330 that night RAF Brize Norton contacted RAF Lyneham to see if it would be feasible to call out the six-hour standby crew to fly to Banak, in Norway, pick up the marine and fly him back to Bristol, where a car would take him to the hospital.

Just before midnight, after a rapid planning session, the operations controller at RAF Lyneham advised Brize Norton that the mission is possible,

although he could not guarantee that the C130 Hercules would be airborne before 0600.

At 0005 it was found that all four crew members were easily contactable, and lived at Lyneham.

They were woken, and despite being given two hours to report for work, all were in within 35 minutes, despite the fact they had had less than an hour's sleep, and had been on standby duty since 0800 the previous morning.

At 0040 the aircraft captain had a full briefing and was given two hours to move, but planning was completed in 90 minutes, allowing the aircraft to take off by 0210.

Given six hours to launch the mission, Lyneham had managed it in little over two.

The aircraft captain requested Brize Norton to contact Banak airfield to ensure the runway was cleared just before arrival – its condition had been reported as icy, with poor runway braking, which would prevent a landing.

At 0500 the crew contacted Norwegian air traffic controllers to reiterate their concerns about the Banak runway – the airfield is the most northerly to be used by British C130s.

The Norwegian plan had been to wait until the Hercules was overhead then clear the way, but that would delay the landing by an hour.

Instead the RAF captain

requested that the runway be cleared 45 minutes earlier, requiring his aircraft to hold overhead for just 15 minutes.

The airfield was duly closed for an hour, and with minimal delays the Hercules was given the all-clear at 0700 and landed five minutes later.

The mission hit a snag at 0720 when the fuel bowser went unserviceable with its valves frozen shut.

A new bowser was found, and five minutes after the marine boarded at 0740 the refuelling was complete, and the aircraft was on the move again by 0755.

By 1000 on the homeward flight – more than 24 hours after the crew's duty period started – fatigue started to kick in, and the captain decided the aircraft could not be safely flown to Bristol.

At 1020 the Hercules contacted Brize Norton to say they would land at Newcastle.

Brize Norton contacted RAF Northolt, resulting in an HS125 of the Royal Flight being diverted to Newcastle to meet the C130.

The HS125 landed at Lyneham at 1150 to pick up a fresh Hercules crew, who would fly the stranded aircraft back to Lyneham, getting airborne again at 1220.

The first Hercules landed at

Newcastle at 1240 and parked up to wait for the HS125, which got in at 1315.

The marine hopped aboard the HS125, while the Hercules crew prepared to fly the inbound C130 to Lyneham.

Both aircraft were aloft by 1345, and the HS125 landed at Bristol at 1430, where the marine was met by a team of RMPs who escorted him directly to hospital.

Meanwhile the C130 landed at Lyneham at 1445, and was airborne again at 1600 for a routine live drop on Salisbury Plain.

The marine reached hospital at 1450 to see his mother, less than 17 hours after first informing his chain of command.

The final loose end was tied up when the HS125 arrived back at Northolt at 1700, ready for further tasking.

The cost of operating a Hercules is around £12,000 per flying hour, and this operation involved ten hours of Hercules flight and three hours of HS125 flight.

Some 50 people were involved in getting the marine back from the Arctic, pushing the boundaries to ensure the operation was a success.

Splashing out on crime prevention

A CRIME prevention initiative at Clyde Naval Base will see Government property spray painted to prevent pilfering.

Not spray painted as in Banksy-style splashes of colour, but with a hi-tech piece of magic called Smart Water.

The spray can be put on to anything, cannot be washed off, and is totally invisible to the naked eye.

But it holds a unique DNA print which can be detected by police scanners, and which can be traced back to a precise location.

That means if anything is stolen and passed on – even more than once – police investigating a crime will be able to identify and trace back any item to its original location.

It also means random checks at both North and South Gates can pinpoint base-owned material which could be in the process of being removed illegally.

MOD Police Chief Inspector Jim Gillen said: "This is a very proactive approach to discouraging theft."

"Smart Water can be applied to anything and our scanners will pick it up right away and every time."

"And the fact that it is invisible means that it is a much more advanced approach than the old 'This is the property of the Ministry of Defence' stamp."

Clyde is trialling Smart Water on behalf of the MOD, MOD Police and Babcock Marine.

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Capricorn cycling

A TRAINEE submariner from London was due to be sweating it out in the saddle on an 850-mile ride across southern Brazil as **Navy News** went to press.

Logs Dan Darwin (21), from Nottingham, was the only sailor selected to take part in tri-Service adventurous training exercise Capricorn Blade 08.

He joined Army and RAF trainees in a 12-strong team which was due to spend nearly a fortnight cycling over roads which follow the Tropic of Capricorn.

That meant a daily target of between 60 and 90 miles, with the riders being self-sufficient to the extent that they either camped out overnight or slept in hostels.

The exercise was designed to develop each

trainee physically as well as allowing them the chance to learn the value of sound planning, defence diplomacy and cultural awareness.

Dan joined the Royal Navy in February this year, and since completing his basic training he has been undergoing specialist training at the RN Submarine School and the Defence Maritime Logistics School, both at HMS Raleigh.

Fortunately, Dan is a keen cyclist, and has an eye on a career as a physical training instructor later in the coming years.

The Brazilian trip should prove useful in achieving an ambitious target he has set himself this summer – to set a new world record for a return trip from Lands End to John o'Groats.

The current record stands at six days and 20 hours.

Belfast drum takes the biscuit



A SILVER biscuit barrel in the RN Trophy Store (left) represents the affiliation between a wartime cruiser and an Army unit.

The Victorian barrel, in the shape of a drum, was presented to HMS Belfast at her launch in March 1938 by the 1st Battalion of the Royal Ulster Rifles.

The piece also features four silver statuettes of Royal Ulster Rifles personnel – a mounted officer on the lid, and on the base stand a drummer, a bugler and a rifleman.

Belfast was involved in the sinking of the Scharnhorst at the Battle of North Cape on Boxing Day 1943.

And in June 1944 she was one of more than 400 Allied warships involved in the maritime element of the D-Day landings in Normandy, when her primary role was to bombard enemy positions near the beaches.

Winston Churchill had planned to embark in Belfast to witness the landings, and it is said that King George VI announced that he wished to be present as well.

Churchill told the King it would be far too dangerous for him to be there, upon which the king is rumoured to have replied that, if this were the case, it was also too dangerous for the Prime Minister.

<http://hmsbelfast.iwm.org.uk/>

Study considers Forces' standing

GREATER encouragement on the wider use of uniforms in public and a national Armed Forces day are two of the recommendations from a study into the standing of the Armed Forces and ways to improve it.

The independent National Recognition Study was initiated by Prime Minister Gordon Brown last December, and was headed by Quentin Davies MP.

Its report has now been published, and the Government has both welcomed it and already accepted a number of its 40 recommendations, chief among them being:

- Greater encouragement on the wider use of uniforms in public;
- The creation of an Armed Forces and Veterans' Day;
- More systematic arrangements for homecoming parades and ceremonies for the award of Campaign Medals and Veterans' Badges;
- An examination of the options to strengthen the cadet forces.

The Government will now consult widely and produce a full response as soon as possible.

Any changes to rules arising from the study – such as the wearing of uniform or speaking in public – will be communicated through normal channels such as updates to the Queen's Regulations.

The study was conducted mainly through interviews with a wide range of more than 300 military personnel of all ranks, and consultations were held with civilians whose contact with the military is significant, including journalists, business, sports and local government leaders, politicians and representatives of military charities.

The team also visited the USA, Canada and France.

The report concluded that the Armed Forces enjoy immense respect and gratitude on the part of the nation.

It also concluded, however, that the foundation of familiarity and understanding on which that support is based has not only eroded, but is likely to continue to erode unless countervailing measures are taken.

The report therefore identified a broad range of initiatives which taken together will move matters forward.

RNPT dates for summer

THE next RN Presentation Team events are:

- Wednesday June 4 at the Hampshire Court Hotel, Centre Drive, Great Binfields Road, Chineham, Basingstoke;
- Thursday June 5 at the Museum of Army Flying, Middle Wallop, Stockbridge;
- Tuesday June 10 at Wakefield Town Hall, Wood Street, Wakefield;
- Monday June 23 at the Hastings Stormont Hotel, Upper Newtownards Road, Belfast;
- Tuesday July 1 at Ye Olde Bell Hotel, High Street, Hurley, nr Maidenhead;
- Tuesday July 8 at the Falmouth Hotel, Castle Beach, Cliff Road, Falmouth;
- Tuesday July 15 at the Hotel Rembrandt, Dorchester Road, Weymouth;
- Wednesday July 16 at the Tiverton Hotel, Blundells Road, Tiverton.

Anyone wanting to book a place at this presentation should contact the RNPT on 020 8833 8020 or email rnpt@gnnet.gov.uk

Tough test for potential POs



Acquaint way of preparing for Navy

THE Royal Navy Acquaint Centre was officially opened in April at HMS Collingwood by Second Sea Lord Vice Admiral Sir Adrian Johns.

This follows the opening of the first such centre at HMS Caledonia in Scotland in July 2005.

The acquaint centres are a direct result of the Director of Operational Capability's (DOC) Appraisal of Armed Forces Initial Training – the DOC Report.

This recommended that potential recruits needed to be better nurtured and prepared for life in the Armed Forces before joining.

Lt Bert Alberts said: "The efforts of RNAC staff over the last several months have finally come to fruition with the opening of RNAC (South).

"The Second Sea Lord was impressed with the facility and the keenness and attitude of the candidates he met during his visit.

"All the candidates were thrilled to have the opportunity to meet 2SL and be involved with the opening ceremony.

"RNAC (South) provides a fantastic opportunity for potential RN ratings to prepare themselves for life in the RN and in particular basic training.

"Together with RNAC (North) we now have the capacity to accept all the RN's yearly new entry recruits."

The centres provide successful RN applicants with a three-day course prior to joining the Navy.

A maximum of 34 attend each week, and get a taste of drill, weapon handling, kit preparation and life aboard a warship, among other things.



● Alpine conditions in the Brecon Beacons for the 26-mile yomp across the Welsh countryside which forms Week 2 of the Senior Ranks Command Course

said: "We make no apologies for making the training difficult.

"The enemy are not going to go easy because the troops are tired.

"If they're very busy, that hurricane-struck island still needs the professional help of the Navy.

"We simulate very real scenarios because at the end of the day, we are sending our men and women out to be leaders in often dangerous places."

If the candidates are still in the frame after the Salisbury Plain exercise they go on to the fourth and final week – though there is still no let-up in the pace.

By now they are practising counselling skills, listening skill and how to conduct a debate.

Briefing sessions are conducted for senior officers and large audiences on subjects in which they are unfamiliar, testing both their research and briefing skills.

Finally, on completion of a 20-minute presentation on Naval subjects in front of a commodore, the academy is in a position to send out a new batch of POs to take their place in the Royal Navy.

Since December leadership training has been bedding down in a new format, with two divisions based at BRNC (RNLA West) and Collingwood (RNLA East).

The new system was created from an amalgamation of the Command Training Group (CTG),

the Leadership Department and the Divisional Training Unit at Dartmouth.

It replaces the RN Centre of Leadership Excellence (RNXL), and is an early result of the Transformation activity in the Naval Core Training Stream.

The Academy is responsible for Command Leadership and Management (CLM) core training for ratings and officers, including pre-promotion Command Training, Initial Officer Training Leadership modules and Divisional courses.

The RNLA delivers the following courses, previously the provenance of BRNC and CTG:

RNLA (West):

■ Initial Officer Training Leadership Modules – all Young Officers undergo intensive leadership training at BRNC;

■ Junior Officers' Leadership Course (JOLC) – all junior officers who are about to commence their first appointments return to BRNC for a one-week course;

■ Warrant Officer's Staff Course – one week, helping newly-promoted WOs address the challenges of their new appointment;

■ Divisional Officers' Course (DOC) – a mandatory, one-off course for potential DOs;

■ Divisional Refresher Course (DRC) – a two-day course for all personnel who have previously completed a DOs Course.

RNLA (East):

■ Leading Rates Command Course (LRCC) – a three-week course designed to develop an individual's CLM skills, and mandatory for promotion and advancement.;

■ Senior Rates Command Course (SRCC) – as described above;

■ DOC and DRC – identical to the ones run at RNLA (West).

Further courses are offered for the RNR and Potential Officer Candidates (POCs).

While individual career

CLM training will be

conducted at the two

RNLA sites, the advent of

the Academy will increase

the scope for remote,

collective training.

Mobile teams from both sites will be able to deliver standard or bespoke leadership and/or divisional



● Building team spirit (aka getting cold and wet) at HMS Collingwood

packages to supplement unit training programmes.

For further information on the RNLA and courses provided see the intranet websites for BRNC and HMS Collingwood.

If you are interested in a course or applying to work at either site contact your career manager.

For career managers, requests should be put forward through JPA or contact Lt Cdr Colin Nicklas at RNLA (West), tel 01803 677177 (mil: 93749 7177), email RNLA-W-OC, or Pete Dowbakin at RNLA East, tel 01329 333167 (mil 93825 3167), email MWS-TS-P4

NAVY NEWS

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Reporting from the Fleet



ARNO

ARNO is the Membership Association and Charitable Trust for serving and retired commissioned officers of the RN, RM, QARNNS, the former WRNS and their Reserves.

The ARNO Charitable Trust provides advice and access to charitable funds for those members, their wives, widows and dependents who are in need and/or experience financial difficulties.

Membership Association subscription: £12 annually or a single payment of £180 for Life Membership.

Contact details: tel: 020 7402 5231 fax: 020 7402 5533 email: osec@arno.org.uk www.arno.org.uk

Please send me details and membership application form:

Name & address:

to: Membership Secretary, ARNO, 70 Porchester Terrace, LONDON W2 3TP



Open the door to housing advice

THE Joint Services Housing Advice Office (JSHAO), despite its web address, provides all Service personnel and their families with information and advice in the consideration of civilian housing options whilst they are serving and when they are about to return to civilian life.

JSHAO also provides help and information to ex-Service personnel who are still in Service Families' Accommodation.

So what information does JSHAO hold?

Interested in buying a house?

The JSHAO stocks booklets on house purchasing that are produced by the Council of Mortgage Lenders – a useful brief for anyone wishing to buy a house, detailing the steps to follow and the pitfalls to avoid.

Pamphlets and information sheets are also available on request.

In order to help Service leavers find housing, the JSHAO also holds a database of information provided by 400 local authorities in the UK and has information and contacts for most of the UK's housing associations as well as relocation companies that specialise in finding property to purchase for Service personnel.

The JSHAO also provides advice and guidance for:

The MoD nominations scheme that helps look for council or housing association housing on leaving the Service;

Low Cost Home Ownership though schemes such as Shared Ownership, 'Homebuy' or 'Right to Buy';

The Long Service Advance of Pay (LSAP) Scheme;

House purchase via Anninton Homes.

If you would like more information, or would like to arrange a housing solutions briefing at your ship, submarine or unit, contact: Joint Service Housing Advice Office, HQ LAND, Erskine Barracks, Wilton, Salisbury, Wilts SP2 0AG, tel: 01722 436575, fax: 01722 436577, email www.army.mod.uk/soldierwelfare/supportagencies/aws/jshao

Jane leads by example



From left: CPOPT Joules Wemer, PO(CIS) Jane Watkins and LLogs (Pers) Scotty Scott

THE mantra of Command, Lead and Manage can be heard in the corridors of JSU Northwood, where PO(CIS) Jane Watkins is championing a practical understanding of leadership challenges at basic and advanced levels.

The senior rate, a former Chief Instructor for three years at the RN Leadership Academy (East) at HMS Collingwood, was determined that the skills she had learnt should be used to develop others in preparation for their own leadership trials.

With the support of senior officers at the tri-Service base, Jane has created a pre-course study guide for both junior and senior rates, and runs weekly classes on Wednesday evenings on CLM.

Jane said: "It was not difficult to get Northwood staff on board.

"I got in touch with Lt Cdr

Mayell here and said 'This is what I would like to do, what do you think?' And the answer was 'Crack on. Brilliant.'

Three people from Northwood have already passed their leadership courses with the help of the booklet and guidance, and another 12 people are working through the CLM course.

AB(CIS) Maz Scarah said: "I

felt more confident and relaxed on the course.

"I had no dramas about standing up and speaking in public.

"It gave me a good insight into the leadership theories used, and I'm so happy that I stuck to my fitness and that Jane pushed me."

Jane stressed: "You do have to be physically fit to do your best on this course."

That's why she's tagged one hour of fitness training into her monthly tutorials, to make sure the ratings are well prepared – she admits that fitness is an integral part of an individual's promotion path.

She said: "I am delighted with the response we've had to the training."

"CLM is so important to the Navy and to channel the abilities of the dynamic and intelligent people it employs."

Jane's Commanding Officer, Col Brazier, said: "A little time invested by the individual reaps dividends in the long term."

"The quality of the personnel coming through Northwood is testament to the RN training system and its leadership courses."

Jane added: "I believe the pre-course study guide could be applied across any unit or area – it just takes some commitment to guide people through the work."

The leadership classes complement the CW training at Northwood, providing opportunities for personnel to benefit from the experience and skills beyond traditional CLM training.

THE TIME OF YOUR LIVES

NAVY NEWS looks back through its pages to recall some of the June headlines of past decades...



Leviathan leaves Portsmouth Harbour for the breaker's yard in 1968

40 years ago

A mighty ship-that-never-was left Portsmouth in the early summer of 1968 to be recycled into razor blades. The light fleet carrier Leviathan was launched in June 1945, but with the end of the war she was abandoned, almost complete and 80 per cent fitted out. For 15 years she was raidied for spare parts, but no buyer could be found and 16 years after her maiden voyage – to Fareham Creek – she was towed out to the breaker's yard.

30 years ago

A racy destroyer undergoing sea trials. Could be talking about Daring – see pages 20-21 – but 30 years ago it was HMS Bristol, the Type 82 destroyer which featured on our front page after it emerged from refit.

20 years ago

With Naval Service climbers going all-out to scale one of the world's most challenging mountains, 20 years ago we told of an attempt to climb over 270 mountains in Scotland higher than 3,000ft – before lunch-time. Boots Across Scotland actually roped in 2,000 climbers for the fundraiser to help a crippled mountain rescue team member, four of the climbers coming from HMS Neptune.

News and information for serving personnel



● Trial participants on the gangway of HMS Exeter; in the foreground from left to right, are CPO(AWT) Clark, PO(AWT) Walker, CO Cdr Paul Brown, PWO(A) Lt Cdr Jim Denney and LS(AWT) Coleman

Picture: LA(Phot) Dave Jenkins

Arresting development in Service police powers

THE Armed Forces Act 2006 is scheduled to be implemented into the Services in 2009, replacing the Naval Discipline Act 1957 and Army and Air Force Acts 1955.

Prior to full implementation of the Act, one key element of change, to be introduced Jul 08, is an extension to the powers of arrest of the RN Police (and other Service Police).

This will give Service Police the authority to arrest Service personnel, irrespective of rank, rate or Service, reasonably suspected of committing, about to commit or having committed an offence.

This power of arrest will also extend to civilians who are subject to Service discipline.

Further details on these changes will be distributed shortly.

Nelson lecture

THE Forces Pension Society, in association with Seafarers UK and the Army Benevolent Fund, will be hosting its annual lecture on Thursday October 9 in Portsmouth Guildhall.

The speaker will be the internationally-known Nelson expert Dr Colin White, Director of the Royal Naval Museum, and his subject will be 'The Nelson Touch.'

Full publicity and ticket sales will begin later in the summer.

See next month for more details of the Society.

It's your 2-6

NEED to get your message across to the rest of the RN?

To feature in 2-6 contact Lt Cdr Gregor Birse (Fleet Media Ops), 93832 8809.



News and information for serving personnel



UK-wide opportunities

British Energy is a FTSE 100 company and is the UK's largest generator of electricity, supplying more than one sixth of the nation's needs and is the lowest carbon emitter of the major UK generators. With a clear focus on safe, dependable energy generation and an ethos of service excellence, we pride ourselves on delivering far more than just power.

We have vacancies within our fuel route, continuous improvement and safety and regulation division teams, all of which will provide outstanding opportunities for personal and professional development as well as competitive salaries, excellent benefits and an attractive relocation package if applicable.

Fuel Route

Barnwood, Gloucester

Fuel route systems branch is the design authority for British Energy's fuel route systems, providing expert advice to our power stations. We have opportunities for engineers to gain experience in one of the most dynamic parts of a nuclear power station. The work offers diverse challenges in areas such as mechanical design, fault studies, safety assessment and operational support.

Mechanical Engineer

Ref: BWD/131880

£25 - £45k

You should be educated to degree level (or equivalent) and ideally chartered or working towards chartered status. You should be able to demonstrate an ability to use sound judgement to identify the most appropriate solution when faced with conflicting demands. We are looking for someone who is a clear and effective communicator with proven interpersonal skills.

C&I Engineer

Ref: BWD/131878

£25 - £45k

The work will require you to acquire knowledge of our high integrity protection, control, and indication equipment, and understand its role in the safe operation of our plant. You will provide advice to our stations on operations, maintenance and fault resolution, and provide safety cases to justify the use of more modern replacement equipment in line with current best international practice.

The following opportunities are senior positions and as such attract a salary and benefits package that will reflect the skills, qualifications and level of experience of the successful candidate.

Various UK locations

Nuclear Oversight Assessor

Ref: BWD/131877

As part of continuous improvement, nuclear oversight seeks to promote excellence in nuclear power plant operations within British Energy by the identification of performance shortfalls and provision of insights into their causes and contributors.

Positions are available at all 8 British Energy nuclear power station locations. We are looking for people with proven experience of nuclear power facility management (commercial or naval), within operation, maintenance, engineering or technical support, who are degree qualified (or equivalent) in a technical subject.

Site Inspector

Ref: BWD/131879

Safety and regulation division provides internal regulation for all of British Energy operations. To carry out the site inspection role, you will need to be a well-rounded nuclear safety professional with the ability to meet the diverse challenges of the role. You should be able to operate and interact effectively at all levels within the company and will have significant experience in design, operation, modification or inspection of a nuclear power station or facility. You will have a naturally inquisitive mind, with a high degree of personal drive and the ability to demonstrate excellent, high level influencing and negotiating skills and handle potential situations of disagreement or conflict. A structured training programme will be provided to prepare you for the role. We are particularly interested in hearing from people who have worked within a regulatory capacity within the naval nuclear programme or have in-depth safety case management knowledge.

To view the full job descriptions, find further information and apply online, please visit www.british-energy.com/careers or call 01452 653740 quoting the relevant reference number, if you do not have internet access.

Closing date: 13 June 2008.

British Energy is committed to being an equal opportunities employer.





RESETTLEMENT

Stepping up from the mess bar?

RUNNING a popular and profitable pub presents many challenges and requires hard work, energy and enthusiasm.

These days, it's not just about a happy smile behind the bar.

It's about immersing yourself in the community, about your ideas and innovations, it's about food and gaming, and it's about your commercial and pub retailing skills.

But at the end of the day, it's all about you and your passion and love for your pub.

But don't just take Enterprise Inns' word for it:

"Mine was a massive lifestyle change, a high powered London job as a business consultant one day, to running my own pub business in Bath the next," said Ashley McMorris of the Pulteney Arms in Bath.

"Funnily enough, I had lived

in Bath for a long time before moving to London and had actually worked behind the bar at the Pulteney Arms.

"That had whet my appetite, so when I decided on the lifestyle change, I wanted to look for a pub just like The Pulteney and, amazingly, it was available!"

"I'm bucking the gastro theme pub trend and have turned my business back into a traditional city centre boozer, simply good beer, great traditional food and a fun atmosphere and it's going fantastically well."

"It's obviously hard work and I can't say I've reduced my hours from when I was in London, but it's all part of my plans for the future and I have never once regretted it."

Visit their website or call their Recruitment Team on 0800 953 0072.

Highflyers need apply

FB HELISERVICES Ltd (FBH) provides support to helicopter operations and training for military and governmental tasks worldwide.

FBH is the main company within a group of joint ventures between Bristow Helicopters (part of the Bristow Group) and FR Aviation Group (part of Cobham PLC a FTSE 100 listed company).

FBH has a wide range of capabilities that combine to provide service provision for military or government requirements that include:

- Provision of Helicopters
- Training
- Maintenance under Civil or Military Procedures
- Provision of aircrew
- Modifications
- Provision of Simulators
- Logistics Support
- Support Services

Since the joint ventures

started in 1995, they have grown into a multi customer and worldwide operation employing 700 personnel operating and supporting 60 company-owned helicopters flying over 40,000 hours per year.

FBH also maintain over 75 helicopters on behalf of the UK military and other governments.

The head office at Basingstoke supports operations at various locations in the UK, Europe, Central America, the Middle East and South East Asia.

FBH has long-term contracts of up to 20 years for the provision of its services. It takes pride in the services it provides to its customers and has a reputation for consistently meeting and exceeding the customer's requirements.

Countering the threat

CHEMRING Countermeasures Ltd is a world leader in comprehensive threat weapon systems and missile countermeasure solutions.

A large and extensive manufacturing site and technology centre allows them to specialise in the design, manufacture and worldwide distribution of a comprehensive range of RF (radio frequency) and IR (infra-red) decoy cartridges for naval, air and land applications.

The company is one of the largest pyrotechnic manufacturers in Europe and world leading in the field of naval anti-missile countermeasures or 'soft-kill' expendables for the protection of ships.

The company's expertise, built up over 40 years, provides both radar-reflective and infra-red cartridges as well as payloads for many current decoy systems.

The products are designed using the latest technology and address new threat weapon systems as they emerge.

Naval products include Distraction, Seduction and Dual Mode 130mm cartridges and will incorporate the new technology of Corner Reflector countermeasures.

Payloads are provided for cartridges in varying calibres up to 130mm.

The company is increasingly contributing to the field of anti-submarine soft-kill ammunition, working on the delivery systems for advance anti-torpedo and, in the future, anti-submarine sensor payloads.

Chemring Countermeasures is a major supplier of passive decoys for the UK Royal Navy and other navies, including those from NATO.

All the products are designed using the latest technology and employ detailed threat analysis, specialised computer modelling, measurement trials and, where appropriate, cooperation with decoy system manufacturers.

This ensures optimum decoy performance against the latest threat missiles for all types of ships.

Chemring Countermeasures Ltd, based at High Post, Salisbury in the UK, employs over 300 people and is a part of the Chemring Group PLC.

For further information about Chemring Countermeasures please visit www.chemringcm.com.

It's all new with New Zealand

NEW lifestyle. New adventures. New Zealand.

The Royal New Zealand Navy is an innovative, responsive and versatile organisation that is currently expanding their fleet with brand new state-of-the-art ships.

The RNZN are looking for outstanding new team members with current or previous service in the Royal Navy to help contribute to the growth of their dynamic Navy.

The RNZN is responsible for the maritime defence of New Zealand and operates mainly throughout the Pacific and South Asia.

The Navy believes the 'right' people are the most important element of their maritime capability.

Everyone has the opportunity to contribute to making the RNZN a world class organisation and the culture encourages people to use their skills to 'make a real difference'.

New Zealand offers a fantastic lifestyle. Auckland is the single

home port for all of the ships of the RNZN and is a vibrant and exciting city.

The whole country is clean and green with golden beaches and is totally suited to those who have a passion for the great outdoors.

CPOMT(P) Tim Clubb joined the RNZN last year and is now serving as a Marine Engineer:

"I love every minute of it and have absolutely no regrets about the move."

"If you want more opportunities, brand new ships, shorter deployments to more interesting places, a relaxed family-friendly atmosphere and to be based in one home port - this is for you!"

There are vacancies across a variety of branches, especially the Marine Engineering specialisation, at the Leading Hand, Petty Officer, Chief Petty Officer, Lieutenant and Lieutenant Commander levels.

Visit their website: www.navy.mil.nz/join-us/uk, or see the ad on page 44 for more information.

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The future is Brighter for adult learning

IN today's competitive market, studying for a new skill can give you the edge, indicate your commitment to learning and show you are taking charge of your own development.

A level 3 qualification does much to improve promotion and employment prospects and is an achievement of which you can be proud.

Martin Ladd, formerly a captain in the Royal Navy and now director of the Hampshire-based training company Brighter Prospects Limited, engaged in the Adult Learner Accounts (ALA) project said: "These are the very good reasons why people should be opening an Adult Learner Account today."

The Learning and Skills Council comment that learning something new could be your first step towards earning more money and opening up new opportunities for you.

Martin continued: "We were selected by the Learning and Skills Council to be one of the training providers in the Adult Learner Accounts trial in the South East of England.

"The ALA scheme is restricted to the south-east region as a pilot and to certain areas in the north-west of England too.

"If you are aged 19-plus and have not yet achieved a full level 3 qualification, the scheme is offering grants from 62.5 per cent to 100 per cent of the cost subject to personal status.

"To take part, you must enrol

before July 31 2008, so if you are interested in either of the qualifications below, act early.

"Courses can then be spread over six to 12 months depending upon your choice of qualification and flexi-hours learning frequency."

Martin added: "The Brighter Prospects Limited Partnership offers two level 3 specialist qualifications backed up by high quality Pitman Training courses, some of which can be studied wholly or partially by distance learning, allowing study in-centre, at home or at work:

■ Level 3 Diploma for IT professionals, including fully interactive on-line distance learning embracing such qualifications as A+, MCSA and/or MCSE

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To take part, you must enrol

■ Level 3 Administrative Diploma, embracing some on-line distance learning opportunities and a wide range of business skills and level 3 secretarial qualifications

If a Level 3 qualification is one of your targets, you can visit www.pitman-winchester.co.uk to find out more about ALAs or call Richard Summerfield, the technical training director, on 02380 013254 for free advice.

If you are thinking of a different way ahead to level 3 skills, Brighter Prospects will be pleased to offer advice and signpost you to a provider on the Adult Learner Account scheme offering the qualification you seek.

Just give them a call or e-mail martinladd@pitman-winchester.co.uk.

FBHeliservices is a joint venture company formed by Cobham and Bristow Helicopters to specialise in the provision, operation and support of helicopters plus associated services for military and governmental applications world-wide.

The Company HQ is in Basingstoke and there are four other UK sites at SAAvN Middle Wallop, Netheravon, RAF Shawbury and RAF Valley plus overseas operations in Belize, Brunei, Cyprus and Dubai. FBH owns and maintains 60 helicopters as well as undertaking third party maintenance on a number of other helicopters.

Aircraft Maintenance Engineers – AIRFRAMES/ENGINES/AVIONICS

Applications are invited from experienced Rotary Wing Engineers to fill vacancies at RAF Shawbury and RAF Valley. Vacancies also exist for Technicians who can demonstrate success with some modules of EASA 66 B1/B2 licence requirements.

Shift work is required and benefits include a competitive salary, free life assurance, personal pension scheme and 30 days holiday per annum plus Bank Holidays.

Ground Radio Technicians

Applications are invited from experienced Ground Radio Technicians to carry out duties including maintaining ground navaids, ground to air and management communications at RAF Shawbury, RLG Ternhill and Chetwynd. Candidates will have a Radio/Radar or Electronic Technical background; clean driving licence and the ability to work at height. Previous experience within a military ground radio environment is desirable along with a 'Q' annotation for navaids and comms equipment and knowledge of interpreting service publications and documentation on engineering related subjects.

Shift work is required with rostered weekend working and "on call" out of hours working. Benefits include a competitive salary, free life assurance, personal pension scheme and 27 days holiday per annum plus Bank Holidays.

For full company details/further job details visit our website www.fbheliservices.com

Applicants should e-mail their CV to shawburyjobs@fbheliservices.com

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Chemring Countermeasures Ltd is a world leader in the supply of RF and IR Countermeasures for air and naval applications.

Due to a significant increase in prospective naval sales opportunities, we have a vacancy for a

NAVAL BUSINESS MANAGER

Reporting directly to the Director Marketing and Sales - Naval, the successful candidate will progressively take responsibility in selected countries for market analysis, bid assessment and tender proposals, strategy and product development together with the introduction of new products into the market place.

A large potential export market will provide varied overseas travel and the Naval Business Manager would be expected to work effectively with customers to meet their requirements.

Ideally, experience can either be based on a Service background in the EW ship defence area and MoD structures/organisations, or a combination of previous naval EW knowledge and negotiating contracts in Industry.

Given the need to speak at international conferences, we are looking for excellent presentation skills, supported by self motivation and the tenacity to follow up opportunities thereby identified.

Interpersonal skills will be essential in order to transform potential orders into sales. Outstanding leadership attributes will bring all the associated parties together to win tenders. Being an effective team player is also very important.

Located near to Salisbury the site is centrally located for discussions with UK naval defence companies and the MoD, as well as being a delightful area of the country in which to live.

An excellent remuneration and benefits package is available to the successful candidate.

Applicants should apply by sending a covering letter, including salary expectations and detailed CV to Philippa Walker, HR Manager, Chemring Countermeasures, High Post, Salisbury SP4 6AS. Email philippa.walker@chemringcm.com

Leaving the navy but don't want to leave the sea?

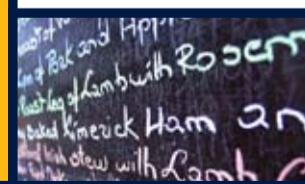


Opportunities available in the South West, South Coast and South Wales areas

Leaving the forces can be a daunting task, but if you have ever wanted to run your own pub business, Enterprise Inns not only gives you 1,000s of pubs to choose from, we'll provide full training and support from day one.

And, with the picturesque locations available, whether you are looking for a quaint rural village or 'picture postcard' establishment not far from the sea, we're sure we'll have the perfect pub to match your preference, many of which are available immediately.

So, if you have left the forces or are soon to be leaving, and are looking for a challenging business opportunity with ongoing advice and support, talk to Enterprise Inns.



For further information, or to discuss, please call the Recruitment Team on 0800 953 0072.

0800 953 0072

www.enterpriseinns.com

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PENFRIENDS
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Find new friends to share life's experiences with! It's so easy! Simply follow the instructions below...

Name: _____
Address: _____
Tel No: _____ Age: _____

Attractive caring female 40. Seeks genuine RN/RM for friendship/relationship. Box June 1
Attractive female 31. Seeks members of UK Armed Forces of similar age for penpal friendship. Box June 2
Seeking young male for f/s to be soulmate. No fly by nites. Box June 3
Big, Bright, Bubbly female, GSOH. Seeks penpals/friendship. Will write. Box June 4

Gentleman would like penfriends/ friends any female service veterans Devon/Cornwall area. Ex Merchant Navy. Box June 5
Female, 57, GSOH. Seeks male penpal, 48+, for friendship. Box June 6
Attractive, caring, female 35. Seeks genuine Navy guy with GSOH for friendship/ relationship. Box June 7

HOW TO ADVERTISE

How to advertise: Simply write your message (£10 for up to 10 words. Each extra word £1 to a maximum of 15 words). Send your cheque or PO payable to 'Navy News' to: 'Penfriends', Navy News, HMS Nelson, Portsmouth PO1 3HH. Replies to your box number will be forwarded on. HOW TO REPLY: Any person who writes to an advertiser must use a stamped envelope bearing the advertisers box number clearly in the bottom left hand corner. The letter should then be enclosed in a second envelope and addressed as above. We cannot guarantee that unstamped letters will be redirected.

NOTICE

All advertisements submitted for entry into the Navy News Penfriend Column are subject to copy approval. Navy News reserves the right to make any amendments which it considers necessary or to edit copy which is in excess of the number of words paid for. Please note: We can take no responsibility for the nature or source of the replies received. All replies are forwarded to you unopened. We therefore advise that you enter into correspondence with caution. Do not give out your address/telephone number until you feel comfortable with your new friend. If you arrange to meet, inform a friend of your whereabouts and always meet in a public place. Trust your instincts and do not meet again if you have any doubts. You must be over 18 years old to advertise in this column.

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Lisa wins a trip to South Africa

A ROMSEY cadet is heading for South Africa this summer after winning a national prize.

Cadet PO Lisa Froment (17), *pictured above*, from Alresford, won the Directors Prize in the CVQO Duke of Westminster Award for her commitment to others both within and outside the cadet organisation.

Almost 130 cadets were nominated for the Award by their headquarters as individuals who possess a wide range of skills and abilities.

Lisa, a Navy Board Cadet, was the youngest cadet to have been short-listed.

She will receive her award at a lunch in London hosted by the Duke of Westminster later this month, and the following day will fly out to South Africa with eight category prize-winners and runners-up.

The group will undertake an environmental awareness course in Kwa Zulu Natal and a cultural project working with and teaching orphaned children.

They will also visit Rorke's Drift, Isandlwana and take part in a walking safari.

"Once again we have been stunned by the exceptional quality, dedication and enthusiasm of young people in our cadet forces," said Edward Woods, chief executive of Cadet Vocational Qualifications Organisation and head of the selection panel.

"Lisa shone as an extremely impressive young woman in an extremely close run selection process between the final 15 short-listed candidates.

"Quietly confident and with a caring attitude towards others, she is an outstanding team player."



Woking cadets paddle their own canoes...

WOKING unit is now able to offer kayaking to its cadets thanks to the generosity of local companies.

Donations from Johnson & Johnson and ISS UK Ltd have enabled the unit to buy five kayaks and associated equipment, allowing staff to teach the sport.

Sgt Chris Richards said: "We are delighted that this year we can start to offer this sport on Goldsworth Lake."

"Kayaking is a fantastic and easy sport for young people to get involved in."

"This, coupled with our other water activities, means that we can offer a significant range of water sports to our cadets, and I'm looking forward to getting our cadets on to the lake in this new equipment."

● *Sgt Chris Richards (centre) and Woking cadets show off their new kayaks*



● *East Kent cadets perform at a charity football match for Help for Heroes at Gillingham's Priestfield Stadium*

East Kent musicians pitch in for charity

EAST Kent cadets pulled out all the stops to ensure a charity event for Help for Heroes had a military band to augment their fundraising football match at the Priestfield Stadium, home of Gillingham.

The band, made up from Ramsgate (TS Bulldog), Folkestone (TS Invicta) and Faversham (TS Hazard) joined by the corps of drums from Chatham Marine Cadets, comprised 26 cadets and adults.

Help for Heroes is a charity dedicated to helping wounded Servicemen and women when they

return home to face life without the Services, and all the additional barriers they face because of their injuries.

The band were asked at short notice to step in and help, and only had one morning's practice together on the day of the event.

Despite this, their skill and professional attitude shone through to produce a performance which wowed the large crowd in the KM Medway Stand.

Originally booked to do a 20-minute slot before the game, they were requested to come back to play again whilst the players lined up to meet the Mayor of Medway, Cllr Val Goulden.

Cllr Goulden, a big supporter of the local Sea Cadet unit in

Medway (TS Cornwallis), was thrilled to see the cadets and waited at the side of the pitch to congratulate them on their performance as they marched off.

Officer in Charge of the band, Lt Cdr (SCC) Kevin Martin, said: "The dedication that the young people who join Sea Cadets show is an inspiration to all of us who work with them as volunteer adults and the general public."

Southern Area Chairman for the Corps (and long time Gills fan) Ivor Riddell said: "We were proud to assist Help for Heroes and hope that the event will go a long way towards their final target for this year."

"The reception the band received was great and it was clear

from the reaction as they left the pitch that the crowd appreciated the performance.

"Sea Cadet bands perform week in, week out up and down the UK providing entertainment for the public."

"But there is so much more that a young person can achieve from being a Sea Cadet."

"Lifelong friendships, life skills, nationally-recognized qualifications from sailing to BTEC and Duke of Edinburgh, travel, adventure and life-changing experiences."

"It is a whole world of opportunity waiting for a young person to grasp and make the most of."

Pride of his unit – and of his mum

ROYAL Marine Cadet Sgt Keifer Stanier (centre of picture) has been awarded the Lord Lieutenant of Cheshire's Certificate of Merit – and one of those watching was a particularly proud parent.

Because the CO of the Warrington unit, of which Keifer is a member, is his mother.

Capt (SCC) Tina Stanier (left) is currently the only female officer in the Royal Marines Reserve, and naturally she was there to see her son's award, together with his grandparents, George and Audrey Walsh.

The presentation, at Fox Barracks, Chester,

was made by the Lord Lieutenant of Cheshire, Col William Bromley-Davenport (right).

Keifer's citation praised his outstanding achievement on the Cadet course at BRNC, Dartmouth, saying his excellent leadership skills made him a driving force within his division.

"He has dedicated the last six years of his life to the Sea Cadets and has excelled in everything that he has done," continued the citation.

"He is fully deserving of the Lord Lieutenant's Certificate of Merit. He's energetic and enthusiastic with a confident manner and engages well with others."



...while others will get their chance

CADETS and adult members of staff will have the opportunity to take part in a round-Britain canoe journey over the next two years.

The 42ft fibreglass and wood Canadian canoe named Spirit Dancer was unveiled on the Thames in London last month, and the first leg of its journey round the UK coast is being undertaken with Canadian students.

But as the boat, the brainchild of Yorkshire-born Canadian Chris Cooper, makes its way west along the South Coast and then north towards Wales and Scotland, the crew will be taken from British and Canadian students.

Spirit Dancer will stay close to the shoreline throughout her journey round the coast, and is expected to cover around 15



● *Aaron Powell*

Aaron is reunited with unit on parade

A NEW sailor from Newton Abbott was among a group of trainees from HMS Raleigh who joined forces with the Teign Valley unit as the cadets paraded their new standard through the streets of Teignmouth.

Seaman Specialist Aaron Powell (17) was a leading cadet with the unit before leaving to join the Navy five months ago.

Aaron said: "I was really pleased to be part of this parade."

"I thoroughly enjoyed my time in the Sea Cadets and had a lot of fun."

"The experience inspired me to join the Royal Navy full time and also gave me a good grounding for my naval training."

"I'd recommend the Sea Cadets to anyone. It's a great way to improve your confidence."

The cadets were part of a 200-strong parade which included reservists from HMS Vivid in Plymouth and representatives of other RN ships and establishments.

Devon District Sea Cadets supported the event with a guard of honour and band from the South West Area,

Representatives of the Newton Abbot branch of the RNA, along with other ex-Service associations, paraded their respective standards.

The old Corps standard, bearing the name TS Teignmouth, was laid up at the church of St James the Less, beside the decommissioned White Ensign of the former HMS Pellew.

The new Colour in the name of TS Canonteign, donated by Newton Abbot RNA, was presented and blessed, then paraded back through the streets.

TS Teignmouth was decommissioned in January 2007 and the unit known as TS Canonteign was formed at the same time to extend the Corps activities along the Teign Valley.

It currently has 24 members.

The new name honours the memory of Admiral Sir Edward Pellew, first Viscount Exmouth of Canonteign.

nautical miles each day.

For safety reasons, the journey will only take place between May and October each year, so the whole trip will not be completed until 2010.

Sea and Marine cadets were in attendance at the London launch, and parties from various units will be there to welcome Spirit Dancer at its ports of call over the next two years.

They will also get a chance to paddle the boat in inshore waters, while there are also likely to be opportunities for adults to fill gaps in the crew from time to time.

For more details of dates of journeys, ports of call and other background information, see the dedicated website at www.spiritedancercanoejourneys.ca

Scouts visit Normandy

A GROUP of Sea Scouts paid tribute at the grave of a Somerset man during their tour of the beaches of Normandy.

The scouts, from the 1st Watchet Troop (RN Recognised Troop 63) cycled 140 miles from Cherbourg to Ouistreham during their half-term holiday.

The aim was to visit the assault beaches and museums along the way – and to find the grave of the only Watchet man known to have been killed during the battle for Normandy.

Having spent the winter practising long-distance rides, cycle maintenance and pitching camp, a group of 34 scouts, explorer scouts, leaders and parent instructors caught the ferry from Poole and the expedition was up and running.

After a warm-up the group, supported by minibuses carrying kit and spares, rode down the Cotentin peninsula to start at the western end of Utah Beach.

Their first camp was at St Mere

Eglise, the first town liberated by the D-Day assault in June 1944, a story recounted in the town's Airborne Infantry Museum.

Also on the second day's agenda was a visit to the German war cemetery at La Cambe, where 21,500 German soldiers were buried, and the scouts pitched their tents at Grandcamp-Maisy for the night.

The third day was spent at Omaha and Gold Beaches, staying at Arromanches, now famous for the remains of its Mulberry artificial harbour.

Day Four brought a break from cycling, with the scouts travelling by bus to the British war cemetery near Douvres, inland from Sword and Juno beaches.

Here they laid a Royal British Legion wreath at the grave of Royal Marine gunner Arthur Webber, from Watchet, who died on August 17 1944 when his Landing Craft (Flak) was torpedoed on the 'Trout Line', a defensive formation of ships off the beaches.

The scouts also placed crosses

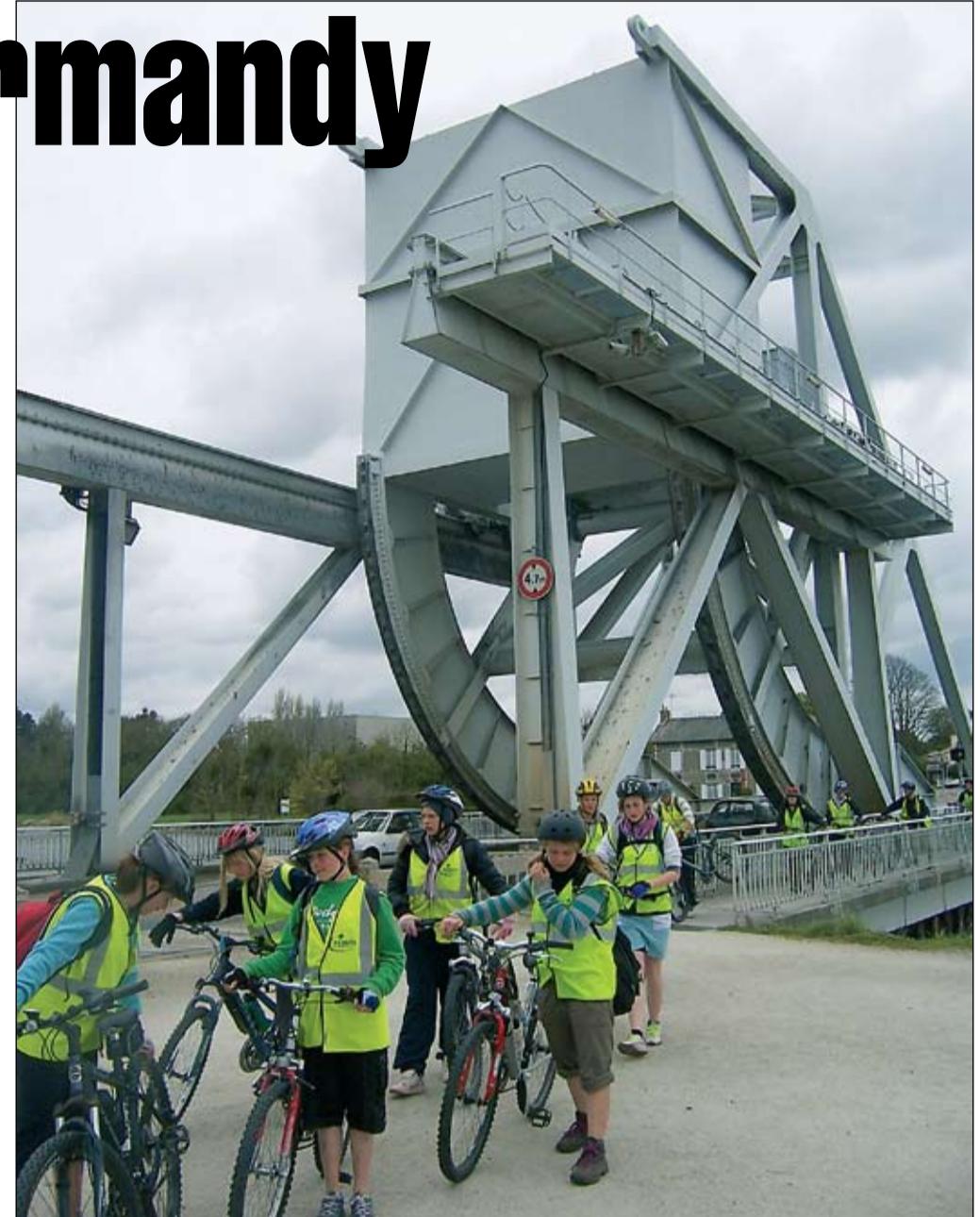
at the graves of other RN, RM and Somerset Light Infantry victims of the war.

That day also saw one Scout (Ashley Phillingham) and six Explorer Scouts (Oliver Claydon, Hannah Peters, Bryony Goddard, Jack Mitchell, Liam Eastwood and Harry Mouzouri) invested into their units at a ceremony in front of their colleagues.

The fifth and final day in France took the cyclists along Gold, Juno and Sword Beaches, finishing off at the legendary Pegasus Bridge – the first piece of Normandy to be liberated, on June 5, before the main assault – and the British cemetery at Ranville.

Then it was a short ride along the banks of the Caen Canal to the ferry port and an overnight passage to Portsmouth, where the scouts enjoyed a full English breakfast at HMS Excellent before being taken on a tour of veteran Type 42 destroyer HMS Exeter, in Portsmouth Naval Base.

Thanks are due to the RBL at Watchet, the Royal Navy and Staff Officer Sea Scouts, as well as friends, parents and supporters of the troop.



● Explorer Sea Scouts Oliver Claydon, Bryony Goddard, Jack Mitchell and Hannah Peters are invested into their troop at a ceremony in Normandy (left), and the Watchet scouts gather at Pegasus Bridge near Caen towards the end of their journey (above)



Victor bows out after 65 years

TRADITIONALLY, 65 is generally regarded as retirement age for working folk.

And at 65 CPO Victor Chandler, of Hull unit, has also decided to retire.

But for Victor it was 65 years of service in the Corps – he has decided to call it a day at the age of 79.

At his retirement evening, cadets staged a play representing his life, then led him off the premises and down the street in a boat on a trailer.

Victor joined the Hull unit at the age of 14 in 1943, and after five years he did his National Service as a Royal Marine.

But he still used to visit the unit when he was on leave, and on being demobbed in 1950 he was taken on by the unit as an instructor, and has been there ever since.

Unit CO Lt Debbie Glanville (SCC) said that grandfathers now approach Victor to tell him that he taught them as cadets.

But there is little doubt in the unit that they have not seen the last of him – most reckon that, even in retirement, Victor will find it hard to stay away.

Methil elated by engineering spirit

FIVE cadets and a member of staff from the Methil and District unit have attended a Class 3 Marine Engineering course at the Sea Cadet Training Centre, HMS Gannet.

The five cadets – OCs Yasmine Hall and David Aitken, and Cadets Cheyanne Liston, John Fraser and Shaun Anderson – were accompanied to Prestwick in Ayrshire by PPO Christine Davies on a Friday night.

On arrival they were given a quick brief and given some idea of what lay ahead over the weekend.

The practical-based course provides a number of engines for cadets to dismantle and rebuild, giving them a good working knowledge of the construction of the engines and how they operate. Students also learn the theory of marine engineering.

The course covered health and safety, engine construction, engine cycles, mechanical systems, electrical systems, basic electrical knowledge and tools and fasteners.

All five Methil cadets passed the course with very high marks, and top of the class was Cadet David Aitken, who notched an impressive 94 per cent.

"I am extremely proud of the cadets and staff who attended the trip to the Somme for ANZAC day commemorations before the Aussies headed home.

if only done over two days," said OIC of the unit, A/CPO (SCC) Alan Duff.

"It is excellent for the cadets involved and the unit to have a 100 per cent pass rate, especially from such young cadets.

"Although we offer the Marine Engineering course within the unit, it is always good for the cadets to go away for the weekend to HMS Gannet, as their facilities are second to none."

The 19 cadets and 5 members of staff from TS Perth enjoyed an action-packed tour of London.

They also visited HMS Bristol and Portsmouth Historic Dockyard before returning to London for a reception and band and drill display on board HMS Belfast.

Ten cadets from Haringey joined the Perth contingent on a trip to the Somme for ANZAC day commemorations before the Aussies headed home.

Mayor greets Shirley squad

FOLLOWING their success at the National Drill and Ceremonial competition, cadets from the Shirley and District unit were invited to meet the Mayor of Solihull.

Cllr Gary Allport asked the cadets and staff to the Council Chambers to re-present the trophies gained in the competition and at both Area and District level.

The Shirley contingent took three out of four trophies in their section, beating units from across the country and a total of around 300 cadets.

After the presentations the Mayor was given an official photograph of the winning squad before he and the Mayoress, Gail Allport, took the cadets on a guided tour of the Council Chambers and the Mayor's Parlour.

Cllr Allport said it was thanks to organisations such as the Sea Cadets that the youth of Shirley, Solihull and surrounding districts are given something to do that will keep them off the streets, and are taught how to behave in a worthwhile fashion.

The Corps also enables cadets to travel throughout the UK promoting themselves and their organisation, the Mayor observed.



● Lt Cdr Heather Pugh (left) receives her certificate from the Lord Lieutenant of Merseyside, Col Dame Lorna Muirhead, watched by Lt Col Stephen Wotherspoon RM, Area Officer Sea Cadets

Certificate for Heather

THE former Commanding Officer of the Birkenhead unit, Lt Cdr (SCC) Heather Pugh, has been rewarded for her outstanding contribution to the Corps.

Lt Cdr Pugh, who is now Deputy District Officer for the Wirral, joined up as a cadet at the age of 12, going on to become an adult member of staff.

She was presented with a

certificate by the Lord Lieutenant of Merseyside, Col Dame Lorna Muirhead.

The citation mentioned her efforts in training and fundraising; Lt Cdr Pugh also organised Corps ceremonials for Trafalgar 200.

In her civilian life, Lt Cdr Pugh is managing director of a recruitment consultancy in Ellesmere Port.

Hitchin founder recalls formation

THE foundation of a Sea Cadet units came about by chance, according to the man who said he is one of the first members.

Dennis Vine said he recently saw a copy of *Navy News* and read the Sea Cadet coverage.

"I thought that it might be of interest that in 1940 I was a member of the **Eastbourne** unit, and in June my school was evacuated to Hitchin in Hertfordshire.

"Several pupils were members of the Corps, and on arrival in Hitchin discovered that there was not another unit in the area.

"We were, however, informed that the HQ of the Navy League had been evacuated there, and consequently four or five of us boldly knocked on the door and asked if a **Hitchin** unit could be formed.

"The man in charge, a Cdr Inglis, agreed, and in a very short time formation occurred, and soon developed into a thriving organisation, complete with band.

"We attended many fundraising events to pay for war weapons, and thoroughly enjoyed it all.

"We were even able to attend a regional event, where we spent a week in camp, and were subjected to rowing whalers on the Thames while we were based in Slough.

"After two-and-a-half years we returned with our school to Eastbourne and resumed our normal (or near-normal) life.

"I believe that the Hitchin unit is still in existence, and I can proudly say that I was one of the founding members. After some 67 years that must be a fair record, and I wish the Corps continued success."

Winchester ends its wilderness years

AFTER years of getting by without a proper headquarters to call their own, the **Winchester** unit now has its very own base.

The 'wilderness years' of TS Itchen were spent camped in a garage, with a caravan acting as the unit administration office.

But now the proud cadets of Itchen have celebrated the dedication of their new premises at Worthy Down Camp.

The dedication was carried out in the presence of the Lord Lieutenant of Hampshire, Mrs Mary Fagan.

Corps and unit chaplain Rev Jonathan Cruickshank conducted the service.

The event was attended by numerous guests who had supported the unit both financially and in other ways over the past few years.

They were joined by cadets from **Poole**, **Parkstone** and **Romsey** units from the Wessex District, and by the band from **Woking** unit.

In true naval tradition a celebration cake was cut by the Commanding Officer's wife, Susan Dyer, and the youngest cadet, Junior Cadet Andrew Milne.

The Unit Honorary Commodore, Rear Admiral Sir Morgan Morgan-Giles, also attended.

He was the last seagoing



● Susan Dyer, wife of TS Itchen Commanding Officer Lt (SCC) Roger Dyer RNR, and the unit's youngest member, Junior Cadet Andrew Milne, cut the celebration cake at the opening of the new HQ

Captain of HMS Belfast and MP for Winchester from 1974-89.

The unit are very grateful to the Commandant and staff at Worthy Down who have quickly made them so welcome.

TS Itchen's fledgling band is looking to add to the enthusiastic

musicians who can already coax a decent tune out of an instrument.

The band made its first public appearance last November, playing for about an hour despite power failures that at times left them completely in the dark.

The Group Commander was so

impressed she thanked the cadets and staff in person, and asked them to play at Worthy Down's Family Day in the summer.

The unit currently has side drums, tenor drums, bass drum, cymbals and bell lyres – upright glockenspiels.

They are also looking for people to play bugles – valveless brass instruments similar to trumpets.

No experience is necessary.

TS Itchen also needs volunteers to help teach the keen members. Contact the unit on 01962 886997 if you are interested.



● Hinckley cadets cheer ship at the rededication of their headquarters

New HQ is cause to cheer

THE newly-refurbished headquarters of **Hinckley** unit has been officially rededicated by the Lord Lieutenant of Leicestershire.

The HQ has benefited from a major extension, incorporating new toilets, showers, a wet changing room, galley and wardroom.

The existing section of the unit has also been fully modernised and upgraded.

The work was funded by a grant of £50,000 from the National Lottery, £16,000 from the Marine Society and Sea Cadets, and £6,500 from former

Mayor of Hinckley and Bosworth, Cllr Mary Sherwin, who chose the unit as one of her charities for the year.

Lord Lieutenant Lady Gretton inspected a guard of honour before performing the opening ceremony.

Unit chaplain Maj Julian Rowley SA conducted a short service of dedication, after which the ship's company and guests cheered ship.

The VIP guest was later shown a number of demonstrations, and presented badges and good conduct stripes to cadets and staff.

The cadets spent a week on or near the water, gaining new qualifications in sailing, power boating and windsurfing, as well as living in close quarters with their friends.

This year 21 cadets made the camp, and enjoyed good weather, which always helps.

Especially as the trip to the camp was used by some cadets for the Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Award expedition.

This required a group to row the unit's boats the 24 miles from Northampton to Thrapston, negotiating 21 locks on the way.

Although they started in snow, blue sky was soon in evidence, and the rowers made camp by nightfall.

The downside was that the boats had to be rowed back again afterwards...

A number of unit cadets also attended ceremonies to remember the deadly floods in the area ten years ago.

Drill honours head South West

CONGRATULATIONS are due to staff and cadets from the **South West Area**, who took 12 of the 15 awards at this year's National Drill, Piping and Ceremonial competition, making them overall winners in what is already a very successful year for the Corps' largest Area.

Hundreds of cadets from all over the UK travelled to HMS Raleigh at Torpoint in Cornwall to compete on one of the warmest days of the year to date.

While every Area had something to celebrate, it was South West who came out on top when the overall prizes were handed out.

The Area Officer, Cdr Neil Hinch, was particularly thrilled to

win his bet with Vice Admiral Sir Jonathan Tod over the outcome of the piping competition.

The Corps is grateful to Capt Jonathan Woodcock, Commanding Officer of the New Entry training

establishment, for welcoming the cadets so warmly to HMS Raleigh and joining them for much of the day.

He also helped the Corps' own Captain (and his old friend and

colleague) Capt Jonathan Fry present the trophies at the end of the day.

Organisers and competitors look forward to returning to Cornwall in 2009.

Commanders Sgt (SCC) Voirrey Wagstaff and Sgt (SCC) Bob Burlace saw the hard work and dedication of the past few months pay off as their cadets walked away with trophies for best arena display and overall winners.

That gave them the title of 2008 National Marine Cadet Drill champions.

They now look forward to the annual Trafalgar Day parade in London, where they will be representing Marine Cadets nationally.

Members of the **Walsall** and **Perry Barr** Marine Cadet detachments took the honours at the National Marine Cadet drill championship at HMS Raleigh.

Under the scrutiny of WO2 Thrift and his team, the cadets – representing 1 Troop Alpha Company (South West Area) – took on the might of X-Ray (Eastern Area), Yankee (Northern Area) and Zulu (Southern Area) Companies.

A close competition ensued, but Detachment

A FORMER Richmond cadet had an unexpected encounter with another ex-cadet from the unit when he completed the first phase of his RN training at HMS Raleigh.

Trainee MA Tomas Herrera joined up in February after eight years at TS Goodwin – five years as a cadet and three as an instructor.

On completion of his nine-week course Tomas took part in a passing-out parade in front of friends and family.

The parade commander was Cdr Mike Flynn, a member of TS Goodwin from 1978 to 1981.

The parade gave Cdr Flynn the chance to catch up with his old Sea Cadet leader, Lt Cdr (SCC) John Porter, who is now the CO of TS Goodwin.

Lt Cdr Porter had travelled to Cornwall from the Home Counties

Former CO wins leadership award

THE former CO of the **Whitehaven** unit has been honoured by the Lord Lieutenant of Cumbria.

S/Lt (SCC) Keith Crowe RNR was in charge of TS Bee for five years, handing over command in February this year.

Under his leadership the unit expanded from fewer than 20 cadets to the current strength of 27 Sea Cadets, 15 Junior Cadets and eight Marine Cadets.

Keith's hard work was recognised when he was chosen to be the North West Area's nominee for receipt of the Capt Roddie Casement Sword, awarded annually to the unit CO who has, by example and dedication, contributed most to the aims of the Corps.

At the time Keith stated that the nomination was a reflection of the whole Whitehaven team, not just an individual.

Now, at a ceremony at Cumbria Police HQ, Col James Cropper presented Keith with his Lord Lieutenant's Certificate.

Whitehaven unit chairman Chas Tinkler said it was a fitting tribute to Keith's five-year tenure.

"Keith has worked tirelessly on behalf of the unit and this award is very well deserved," he said.

"Keith's achievements have set us on a firm foundation on which we can build and move on to even greater successes in the future."

Keith's involvement with the Corps started nearly 30 years ago when he signed up as a Whitehaven cadet, and he was followed by his son Scott, who left TS Bee to join the Royal Navy last year.

Although he has handed over the reins of power, Keith is still involved in the unit, being a member of staff of the Marine Cadet detachment.



Past and present meet at Raleigh

to see Tomas on parade. Cdr Flynn said: "I was thrilled to meet Lt Cdr Porter again and MA Herrera.

"Lt Cdr Porter was a CPO when I was a member of the Sea Cadets, and it is great to know that he is still there passing on his experience to the current generation of cadets.

"Being a member of the Sea Cadets gave me an excellent grounding when I embarked on my Naval career in 1981.

"Initial training can be a real culture shock, and to have a head start in the basic skills such as drill and Naval terminology is a tremendous benefit.

"I hope MA Herrera goes on to have a successful Royal Navy career and takes advantage of the many opportunities that will come his way."

Midland detachments end on top

Members of the **Walsall** and **Perry Barr** Marine Cadet detachments took the honours at the National Marine Cadet drill championship at HMS Raleigh.

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● Fighting steel... The 16in guns of the USS Iowa fire a broadside during a gunnery demonstration in 1984. Picture: US Navy



On the gunline

Crashing and burning

THERE was an element of *Schadenfreude* among the media and considerable leg-pulling from our Australian cousins when HMS Nottingham careered into Wolf Rock six years ago.

The jagged peak almost did for the destroyer; her crew's damage control expertise saved her. A couple of dozen million pounds ensured Nottingham would sail again.

Nottingham was just one of the high-profile groundings the RN has suffered in recent years – Grafton and Grimsby (both in Norway) spring immediately to mind.

Accidents involving warships are neither the preserve of those flying the White Ensign, nor are they seemingly more frequent these days, far from it.

For as Malcolm Maclean – currently the Marine Engineer Officer of HMS Liverpool – shows in *Naval Accidents Since 1945* (Maritime Books, £30 ISBN 978-1-904459-323) the oceans are littered with the wrecks and remains of warships lost since 1945 in peacetime duties.

Indeed pretty much every class of ship from carriers to tugs in every navy of the world has either foundered or been severely damaged by a litany of disasters.

Some fell victim to the wrath of God: HMS Berkeley Castle was lost (in dry dock) to the storms of 1953, RFA Green Ranger wrecked on the rocks at Hartland Point in 1962, the landing ship USS Mahnomen County driven ashore in Vietnam during storms.

Some fell victim to fire: Canada's submarine Chicoutimi was gravely damaged by an electrical blaze in storms four years ago, while two-thirds of the crew of the Soviet boat Komsomolets died when she was ravaged by fire and rocked by explosions off Norway in 1989 which sent her plunging to the bottom of the ocean.

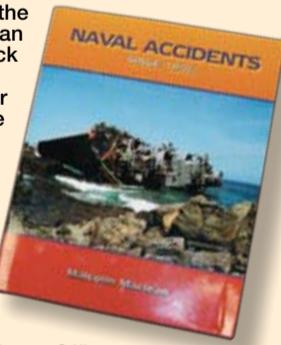
Many have fallen victim to running aground: the tanker RFA Ennerdale ploughed into uncharted rocks off the Seychelles which carved her open in June 1970 while a similarly unmarked sea mountain almost claimed the USS San Francisco more than 500ft below the Pacific three years ago.

And, worryingly, many have fallen victim to flawed designs and structural failures: nuclear submarine USS Thresher imploded, killing all aboard, thanks to the failure of a joint, while the former HMS Totem, renamed Dakar in Israeli colours, most likely succumbed to faulty pipe welding which flooded her.

The author has drawn on more than 500 sources from around the world for this extensive, fascinating – and sobering – work.

It is a timely reminder that there is peril at sea daily in peace and war.

And, to end on a positive note, accidents and groundings are far fewer today than half a century ago – perhaps due to the world's navies shrinking, but certainly due to improved training, survival kit and technology.



SURFACE gunnery may now be relegated to the role of shore bombardment, but from the late 1880s to the early 1940s, it was the primary means by which naval warfare between major warships was conducted.

Its apotheosis was the era of the dreadnought, the all-big-gun capital ship, a type made possible by major advances in fire control that increasingly came to use highly sophisticated instruments, including the first analogue computers, writes Prof Eric Grove of the University of Salford.

These monster ships – the most spectacular warships ever – always exert a great attraction to historians and enthusiasts alike.

In recent years the former have become split by an increasingly polarised debate between the supporters of the two fire control 'tables' (as they were known) trialled by the Royal Navy before World War 1, those of Arthur Pollen and Frederic Dreyer.

This has become a minefield where one navigates with care, but few are better qualified to do so than that doyen of modern naval analysts, Dr Norman Friedman.

As a physicist by training, he understands the complexity of the mathematics and technologies involved.

Also, as an experienced and highly professional historian, no-one knows or has used the archives and other available sources more extensively or to better effect. When it became known he was working on a fire control book – *Naval Firepower: Battleship Guns and Gunnery in the Dreadnought Era* (Seaforth, £40 ISBN 978-1-84415-701-3) – we awaited its appearance with high expectation. We have not been disappointed.

Sensibly, Dr Friedman has eschewed polemic or controversy and he tells the story without unnecessary criticism of previous writers.

Indeed, on reading his account it becomes clear as to why the argument over the effectiveness of particular machines is so sterile: fire control instruments are means to an end not ends in themselves.

Different national technological choices reflected different cultural approaches to problem solving on each side of the Atlantic.

In the Royal Navy, gunnery was the preserve of a highly specialised and trained 'G' elite who only wished to be aided by technology, not governed by it.

They required equipment that aided their spotting and which primarily depended on accurate observation.

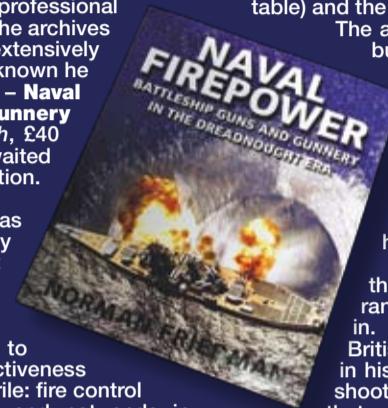
This is what Dr Friedman tells us the US Navy called the 'analytic' approach, of which the Dreyer table was 'the high point'.

As that great gunner Lord Chatfield would have put it, the emphasis was on the "skilled user of weapons".

The Americans, with their generalist 'jack of all trades' officers, put more reliance on technology and wanted equipment, similar to Pollen's, that could produce a mechanically computed solution on which the guns could effectively be fired blind.

The technology, not the skilled user, provided the corrections. Understandably the American Dr Friedman aligns himself with this 'synthetic' approach, which he says 'was clearly better' as the technology itself ironed out the errors. I can quite understand why the graduates of British long gunnery courses might have disagreed.

The proof of the pudding was in the eating. British readers will smile to see that, when the Americans brought their superior instruments to Scapa in 1917, the gunnery performance of the US battleships was



significantly inferior to that of the British.

British gunnery officers thought the overall American system of fire control was a decade behind the Royal Navy's.

Unsurprisingly, American officers remained loyal to their system. Indeed, junior officers at Annapolis were reassured that the British had looked upon the American Ford range keeper with attached plotter as 'superior to anything' they had. Clearly without it the quality of American gunnery might have been seriously embarrassing!

The British did acquire computers of similar performance to the Americans' but the overall technique, the interface of the skilled user and his machines, was the key rather than the quality of the fire control tables themselves. These differing transatlantic approaches to technology have their echoes today in the contrast between 'network enabled' and 'network centric' thinking.

Even after improved equipment which could churn out synthetic solutions became available, British gunnery control officers still relied primarily on spotting.

Indeed, as Dr Friedman admits, by the beginning of the Second World War "the Royal Navy still had not decided how control should be shared between the transmitting station (particularly if it had a synthetic calculator such as an Admiralty Fire Control table) and the control officer aloft."

The author does not just cover the two major navies but he examines their German and Japanese enemies as well as the French, Italians and Russians.

He demonstrates that German gunnery was often quite poor, although given the lack of sophistication in its fire control methods it is perhaps surprising that it was as effective as it was. Superior stereoscopic range finding at the outset of an action was perhaps a key factor here.

Interestingly, Dr Friedman is dismissive about the British claim that the ability of stereoscopic range takers went off as battle or other fatigue set in. He quotes American experience and the later British partial adoption of stereoscopic range finding in his support, but there is a consistency in German shooting going off quite seriously in both world wars that needs accounting for.

Rather more discussion would have helped us in the assessment of British shooting at Jutland.

This was indeed good overall, but it was not even in quality between the Battle Cruiser Fleet and the Grand Fleet.

It was the success of the latter that made up for the gross gunnery failures of the former, which, apparently, had not done badly at Dogger Bank. Why the deterioration? The account of the gunnery lessons of Dogger Bank is refreshingly positive, but it is misleading to say that Lion was hit "with little lasting effect". Physically perhaps, but her being forced to fall out of line had fundamentally negative results on the battle's outcome.

The book sheds much fascinating new light on Japanese and Russian gunnery. The former's elaborate superstructures are explained, while the advanced techniques of the latter in World War 1, are given due credit.

Russian gunnery in the Russo-Japanese War was also not as bad, at least in theory, as previously thought. Dr Friedman considers it was "much more sophisticated than the Japanese system", but again it was results that mattered, not instruments, or even systems.

This is a magnificent and important book. It is slightly misnamed, as it covers other ships than battleships, but this makes it all the more comprehensive.

It has to be very technical in places, but the less scientifically and mathematically-minded can gloss over these sections and benefit from the general analysis. Not all will agree with everything the book says, but it is, without doubt, the best single work on this controversial subject. It is beautifully and interestingly illustrated which makes it even more worth the £40 asked.

Naval Firepower is yet another impressive product of the new Seaforth publishing house, which deserves our gratitude and congratulations for the high standard of its early output.

The definitive Zeebrugge

HAVING followed the author's exhaustive research on the internet, it's fair to say that Paul Kendall's *Zeebrugge Raid 1918: The Finest Feat of Arms* (Spellmount, £25 ISBN 978-186227-4778) was eagerly awaited.

In the flesh, it does not disappoint – in fact it surpasses expectations, writes Richard Hargreaves.

Zeebrugge is probably the ultimate *Boy's Own* story of the Great War – the attempt by sailors and marines to cork the U-boats in their bottle by blocking the Belgian port on St George's Day 1918.

The raid failed in its aim, but such was the success of the British propaganda machine – and the bravery of the men involved – that this "immortal deed" became an instant tonic to flagging Allied morale in the spring of 1918.

It is a story oft told – but never better and never as comprehensively, or as copiously illustrated.

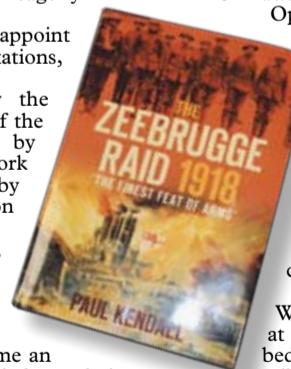
Regular *Navy News* readers will know that we aim to recount battles from 'both sides of the hill' in our historical features.

So, refreshingly, the author describes the Zeebrugge raid from the viewpoint of attacker and defender (the latter is often sorely neglected).

The emphasis, nevertheless, is quite rightly on those men who stormed the Mole or led blockships into the gates of hell that fateful April 23.

Many of these stories will be well-known: the accounts by Royal Marine Sgt Harry Wright or Capt Alfred Carpenter VC, for example.

But many will not, thanks to the author's efforts to track down the families of participants.



Indeed, a good third of the book is devoted to a series of moving biographies and first-hand accounts from every aspect of the assault and support force.

LS Edward Gilkerson volunteered for Operation ZO (Zeebrugge and Ostend), leaving behind the magnificent dreadnought HMS King George V to join the obsolete cruiser *Vindictive*. It would be his final ship; he was killed, probably by a shell.

His battleship shipmates mourned his loss as much as his parents did. They wrote an eloquent and heartfelt letter of condolence to the Gilkersons:

"Dear parents of a noble son. We find him one with all things at night the stars show us where a bed is made for him in Heaven."

"As long as men's hearts are young and the blood runs warm, Edward Gilkerson's memory will be great."

Often overlooked in the aftermath of the raid are the funerals which followed in its wake: there were burials for a good week or more afterwards, invariably very public affairs.

More than 20,000 people turned out in Newcastle for the funeral of Pte David Latimer, a barber and champion swimmer turned Royal Marine. No lesser a figure than the city's mayor addressed mourners, praising Latimer's commitment to "truth, love and liberty". He had died, "the noblest death a man could die".

There are now living reminders of the raid; the last survivors passed away in 2002, but their immortal deed will rightly live on through this outstanding volume.

The blurb on the dustjacket proclaims "there is no more complete account" of the raid. It is spot on.

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Anglers show their Creuse control

WITH a fish that size, you're allowed to feel just a little smug...

... and this 43lb mirror carp wasn't even the biggest catch of the week for angler Lee Goodwin.

Lee and nine colleagues from the RN&RMAA spent a week at Eden's Lake in the Creuse region of France.

Travelling from Plymouth, Culdrose, Poole and Liverpool the fishermen met the Portsmouth contingent at HMS Excellent ready for the Channel crossing.

The mountain of equipment used by the modern-day carp angler coupled with its military look caused the gate staff to enquire where we were going on 'exercise'.

Conditions in Creuse were far from ideal with changeable winds and wildly-varying temperatures.

Electronic bite alarms and other such wizardry enabled the intrepid team to fish 24/7, spending the nights bivvied up from the rain (and frost).

North Lake appeared to suffer most in the conditions with the six anglers managing seven carp between them, including three over 30lbs and two new personal bests for CPO Neil Jones (HMS Drake) – 39lb 3oz – and LS Ben Cartwright (HMS Collingwood) – 31lb 8oz, upping his best by over 20lbs.

Jolly Pads Lake turned out to be the most prolific with four anglers hooking 12 fish.

'Top rod' for the week was Lee Goodwin who managed to bank seven fish, four of them were 30s and two 40s including his personal best of 45lb 8oz.

POAEM Si Baker (RNAs Culdrose) and POAEM Steve Cowe (RFA Fort Victoria) also raised their personal best weights to over 30lbs.

Ruck and roll this summer

THIS month the RN embraces the concept of summer **Rugby League** with a succession of matches at all skill levels – and, for the first season, both sexes.

Amongst the highlights is the annual 'Origin Match' at Temeraire on June 18 when the RN locks horns with the RM, beaten in 2007.

The first season of matches for the RNRL Women continues apace with an away match against a Nottingham University side June 14.

The newly-formed Portsmouth Seahawks continue their inaugural season with home and away fixtures.

The Seahawks are the brainchild of CPO 'Waggy' Wagstaffe in giving match practice on a regular basis for the RNRL squad players as well as developing the sport in Portsmouth with the aid of civilian players.

The full list of fixtures is available at www.royalnavy.mod.uk/server/show/nav.3755



Overall 19 fish were banked including ten 30lbers and two 40lbers with five new personal bests.

To find out more about RN/RM Carp Angling contact PO Si Baker on 93781 2156 or

PO Si Gay on 93781 7901. The RN&RMAA caters for all angling disciplines within the RN and RM. See www.rnandrmaa.org.uk

Picture: PO(Phot) Sean Clee, RN Photographer of the Year (again), FRPU West

Heron's double triumph

HMS Heron men's **hockey** team followed up a 10-0 drubbing of HMS Sultan in the RN Cup Final with a tri-Service double.

For the RAF and Army cup winners also fell to the Heron sword, writes *Lt Matthew Grice, HMS Heron hockey manager*.

And just to add to the Somerset trophy cabinet, Heron's ladies won their tri-Service Cup final setting a new RN record; – the first establishment to hold both the men and women's cups simultaneously.

The first game of the finals saw the airmen take on Joint Force Harrier – the RAF Cup winners.

Heron started the stronger with CPO Hendra (Heron's player of the tournament) grabbing a couple of early goals and giving us the momentum in first half.

Inspired by an excellent performance from the midfield – CPO Carter and Mne Smith – and following a timely substitution up front, Lt Dale grabbed two more

goals before the break.

With a 4-0 lead, Heron made a number of tactical substitutions in order to rest players for the second game.

Unfortunately this disrupted the structure of the team and JFH scored just after the break.

Although Lt Lomas grabbed a fifth goal from a well-worked short corner it was only as a result of some outstanding goalkeeping from LAEM Potter that kept JFH to their one consolation goal.

The second game was against the School of Electrical and Aeronautical Engineering, the Army cup winners.

Unfazed by torrential rain Heron put in an exceptional cup-winning performance.

Once again the midfield competed well to dominate the game with CPO Hendra again grabbing two goals before the break.

Not resting on their laurels the fliers came out just as strongly in the second half.

A well-worked short corner saw

a shot by CPOPT Carter deflected goalwards by CPO Beaudro. Not put off by an earlier disallowed goal AET Harradine scored to put Heron firmly in the driving seat.

Two late goals from Lt Lomas and PO Smith saw the airbase run out 6-0 winners and clinch the tri-Service cup for the first time in more than ten years.

The ladies were in action against an Army side from Northern Ireland.

This was a hard-fought game with both sides producing some early shots on goal.

The deadlock was broken midway through the first half when PO Patterson, the Heron captain, scored from a well worked short corner.

PO Dryhurst scored an excellent individual goal shortly after to give the team a 2-0 lead at half-time.

Stalemate in the second half saw both sides playing very good hockey with Heron's keeper, Logs Smith, producing some first-class saves to keep the Army strikers at bay to secure that 2-0 victory.

Put your paddle to the metal

RN Kayak Association paddlers not only compete against the other Services in the disciplines of slalom, white water racing, surf, freestyle, marathon and sprint and polo... but there's also a healthy contingent of sea paddlers.

The latter have taken advantage of the Joint Service Adventurous Training Scheme and conducted expeditions in Scotland around the Isle of Skye, North Wales around the island of Anglesey and on much of the beautiful Cornish coast line.

The most prestigious expedition last year was to James Ross Island in the South Atlantic with the invaluable assistance of HMS Endurance.

The next major expedition – in February 2009 – will be to the dramatic and

challenging 'Fiord Land' in New Zealand.

To start the season off some of the paddlers organised a trip using the support of the Portsmouth Command AT Centre to paddle around Portsea Island.

The trip was organised by Lt Cdr Joe Wood, Staff Officer Adventurous Training, and took under four hours (despite a pause for birdwatching near Farlington marshes). Joe was accompanied by Lt Matt Twiselton and Lt Paul Bastiaens.

The Command AT Centres are the hubs for their respective areas and offer great support in organising AT or Challenging Activities (CA) but it is recommended that you contact your unit PTs initially.

Although CA (mountain biking and walking) do not require qualifications all AT

activities do, personnel are encouraged to take advantage of the training available at the Joint Service Level 4 Centres to gain the qualifications needed to lead others. There is a real lack of qualified personnel.

Anyone interested should contact their respective Command AT Centre: POPT Zoe Hennessey (Portsmouth 9380 24392); Cpl Steve Perry (Plymouth 9375 65312); POPT Greetham (Scotland 93255 3300) or C/Sgt Farthing (also Scotland 93785 4232).

Those interested in paddling for the RNKA should contact Lt Twiselton 93510 4336 or Lt Cdr Wood SO2AT 9380 22590.

● *Lt Matt Twiselton, Lt Cdr Joe Wood and Lt Paul Bastiaens power through the Solent* Picture: LA(Phot) 'Simmo' Simpson, FRPU East

Golfers' mixed bag of results

THE 2008 golf season opened with less-than-clement weather – and results have been equally mixed.

The men kicked off with the prestigious Brent Knoll Bowl at Burnham and Berrow.

The course is a very tough traditional links course and presents an ample challenge to any golfer in calm conditions.

Add to that almost hurricane winds at times with the ball falling off tees and rolling unaided on greens, the task was severely exacerbated.

However as we keep hearing – it was the same for all! Non-playing captain Cdr Neil Hinch was in charge of affairs and reported that the team performed well in the first round to overcome one of the local teams.

Unfortunately the draw then pitched the team against the favourites and the RN went out in the second round. Their opponents did live up to their billing and go on to win the event the following day.

Three weeks later saw the traditional annual match against Cornwall played this year at Tehidy Golf Club near Camborne.

The RN put out a team of 12 this time and although he had played in the Brent Knoll, CPO Richard McInstray (DES Bath) was experiencing his first county opposition.

The prolonged winter weather had hit all courses hard and unlike most years, there had been little opportunity for growth and conditions are not as good as clubs would like.

The damp drizzly weather made the going hard and particularly wet underfoot.

The county team had the usual mixture of experience and youth and, as in most county fixtures, were significantly better than the RN team in handicap terms; the overall loss by 3½ points to 14½ bore this out.

There were however some good and encouraging performances –



Five-star Talan

PARALYSED RN skier Lt Talan Skeels-Piggins claimed the No.5 spot in the world at the IPC Downhill – after considering giving up the sport.

The officer's season has been plagued by equipment failures and injury, so remaining positive and competitive throughout the winter has been a real struggle.

"I know that without the support of the GB Team, my family and friends, I may well have decided to pack it all in," said Talan (pictured above on the slopes).

He didn't. Instead, Talan (HMS Flying Fox) attended numerous training venues and races throughout Europe and North America, including the Combined Services Alpine Championships in Meribel.

That event allowed other serving personnel to see disabled ski racing at the same time as promoting the 'battle back' initiative which provides adventurous training for injured and disabled service personnel.

The races also provided valuable training for Talan's next set of IPC races in North America, where he won two bronze medals, one in the downhill the other in the Super G.

"Winning my first bronze in the downhill was amazing and I felt incredibly proud."

"However, the second bronze in the Super G, was even more special as I was part of a British one-two-three."

"It was a feat that had never been achieved before and really lifted the confidence and spirit of the entire GB Team."

"I'm glad I didn't give up, as qualification for the Winter Paralympics in 2010 is now well within reach and I intend to come back with a medal for all those who have supported me."

After his difficult, yet successful season, Lt Skeels-Piggins has now returned home to Bath, where he is concentrating on rehabilitating from his injuries and improving his fitness levels at the Bath Sports Training Village.

He is also continuing to provide operational capability for the RN as part of the MTO(A) branch, which sees him take on the AWNIS Duty Officer role during exercises, such as Loyal Mariner 08, at Northwood.



Micky raises the bench mark

THE inaugural RN/RM bench press competition took place at HMS Collingwood, courtesy of the newly-formed RN/RM Powerlifting Association.

The aim was to introduce Senior Service personnel to competitive powerlifting – bench press comprises one of the three disciplines (the others being dead lift and squat).

The competition was open to all RN/RM and invited guests and was well attended. All the competitors, divided into different weight categories, were allowed one lift in each of the three rounds of the competition, with the aim being to progressively lift increasing weights to achieve a maximum lift by the third round.

The event was honoured to be attended by a guest lifter, the reigning British Drugs-Free Power Lifting Association (BDFPA) bench press world champion, the Army's WO Neil Thomas.

There were 21 competitors – and each one lifted beyond expectations.

Setting the bench mark with RN/RM records were:

LPT Sean Cole, winner 67.5kg (110kg)

LOM Tom Jones, winner 75kg (110kg)

LOM Les Gregory, winner

82.5kg (120kg)

SGT Micky Yule, winner 90kg (160kg)

Lt Cdr Simon Wynn, winner

100kg (167.5kg)

OM Kelly Davies, winner

Womens (30kg)

Power-lifting uses the 'Wilkes formula' to calculate weight lifted in relation to bodyweight; this allows competitors of different bodyweights to compete directly against each other.

The 'lifter of the day' trophy went to Sgt Micky Yule (Defence Diving School) in the 90kg weight class with an impressive lift of 160kg.

A promising beginning

THE RN cricket season opened in sweltering heat against Incogniti over two days at Burnaby Road.

The RNCC had a blend of experience and youth and scored heavily throughout, but ultimately found the task of dismissing Incogniti a second time too much, despite a rapid scoring rate on the second day, giving them ample time to do so.

The first match for the representative side saw the RN produce a commanding performance to finish victors by 7 wickets.

Tight bowling and athletic fielding restricted the Free Foresters to 197-9, with fast bowler Lt J Parker (Raleigh) taking 4-25 as the stand-out performer.

The RN reached their target with eight overs to spare, thanks to Mne D Upton making a most sound 67, skipper Lt Cdr Paul Snelling RN (ABW) hitting an unbeaten 61 and Lt A Ainsley RN (JACSC) scoring 22 not out off six balls.

The U25 side followed the seniors' lead with a convincing victory against United Services Portsmouth.

The RN batted first and posted a total of 187-9 with Lt Ainsley hitting an impressive 83.

Then the bowlers dismissed the hosts for 100, spearheaded by this season's team captain POAET Daisy Adams (782 NAS) 2-32 and Mne Dave Upton (Temeraire) 2-20.

Ainsley had the final laugh though as he returned figures of 3-8 as the RN cruised to victory.

■ TICKETS for the Army-Navy encounter at Lords on Tuesday July 29 are available from Lt Cdr David Cooke on 023 9272 3741 or rns04@adii.mod.uk

• Brands new... Sgt Bill Callister gets used to the Brands Hatch Indy circuit for the first time Picture: PO 'Dutchy' Holland, Phoenix CBRNDC School



Wet 'n' windy at the Indy

THE legendary Brands Hatch tarmac was the venue for rounds three and four of the North Gloucester Road Racing Club, with the RN Automobile Club represented in force.

Sgt Bill Callister (UKLF CSG), LAETs Jamie Adam and Loz Seaman (both RNAS Yeovilton) all roared around 1.2-mile Indy circuit, in very changeable weather conditions – from bright sunshine to torrential downpours.

For the Phoenix Open – open to any bike size – Bill and Jamie were in the same qualifier.

Bill qualified 37th – very acceptable as he had never raced at Brands before – with Jamie three places ahead of him.

This put the pair in the 'A' Final, where Bill made a good start and

immediately made up places in the pack.

So too did Jamie and after a couple of laps he nipped past Bill going into Druids.

The two riders made up more places, but Bill struggled to overtake the air mechanic – the two crossed the line just 2.45 seconds apart, Jamie in 19th, Bill one place behind.

Next up was the F600: Both Jamie and Bill qualified for the 'A' Final, while Loz was in the 'B' Final.

The A event was not as hotly contested between the RN and RM as the open final had been.

Bill's rear tyre had seen better days and after trying to spit him off no less than three times on the opening lap, he had to slow for

safety reasons.

Jamie continued to ride extremely well and finished 17th, just outside the points after starting 27th on the grid.

Only Bill entered the open race on the second day of the meeting, held in violently changeable weather – and road – conditions.

This made tyre choice really difficult for everyone there racing.

Bill went out for qualifying, but had only managed three laps of a 20-minute session before the heavens opened.

He nevertheless qualified for the Open A Final, put on wet tyres and clawed his way up from 35th to 18th – despite the track drying out.

In the George White 600, Jamie stormed from 31st to 8th in his

qualifier, while Bill had an equally impressive race, climbing to 8th as well.

It meant the Royal would start the final in 15th place on the grid with the FAA challenger one spot behind.

The weather meant Jamie on dry tyres decided not to race, but Bill did – despite truly atrocious conditions.

The green beret made a blinding start and was in 8th place by Druids. Not realising that he was in for his first top-ten finish in an 'A' Final, Bill encountered visor problems and was struggling to see.

After hitting another rider going into Clearways, he had to slow to finish without crashing. He eventually finished in 11th.



Vanquished yet victorious

THE home of Army boxing in Aldershot was the venue for the 2008 Combined Service Championships.

From the start, the odds were packed against the Senior Service, writes Lt Lucy Abel, RNBA.

The Army fielded a full squad but the Navy, struggling all season for numbers, could manage to field only eight of the 12 weight categories.

Faced with a 4-0 head start, an away venue and a 25-year title reign for the Army, the Navy team had their work cut out.

With only a week on the squad to prepare, MEM Gareth Smith (pictured in pensive mood, above) opened the proceedings at 54kgs.

Cautious at first against opponent Pte Scott Southey (Army), Smith's confidence grew as he shook off the 'ring rust'.

In the third round he delivered a devastating rear hand from which his opponent never recovered. The referee stepped in, giving Smith (HMS Argyll) his first CSBA title.

The Navy saw two further early stoppages in their favour. Welterweight AB Mark Flowers (Ark Royal) employed his superior skills and experience to stop opponent L/Cpl Gav McGee in the third round with a thundering left hook.

Heavyweight Mne Joe Harvey (CSG RM) kept his cool against Spr A Macdonald, who had tried to unnerve him. A strong rear hand to the head forced the army boxer to his knees – Harvey wasted no time finishing the job and forcing a stoppage.

Despite fine performances from team captain Mne Paul Ferguson (RM Poole), AB Andy Neylon (HMS Cornwall) and Mne Nick McGarry (RNAS Yeovilton), their opposition were simply too experienced, and all three lost on points, although *Boxing News* writer Malcolm Meredith described Neylon as "probably the best RN boxer of the night".

AET Paul Ormston (Yeovilton) had the daunting prospect of Welsh international L/Cpl Gareth Jones (Army). This unusual

spectacle of two southpaws saw Ormston box out of his skin to force the Welshman on to his back foot and resulted in the Navy boxer claiming his first CSBA title on a points victory at 86kg.

This year saw the return of Mne Mick O'Connell (CS GRM) to claim a very impressive sixth CSBA title, the first at super heavyweight against Pte Lee John (Army).

O'Connell resisted the invitation by the army boxer to get drawn into a brawl and cleverly kept to his long range boxing. His tactics paid off as John faded in the last round offering the marine a golden opportunity to stop his opponent in the forth round.

Despite the Navy team winning 5-3 on competitive bouts on the night, the Army held on to the title with an overall 7-5 victory once the walkovers were taken into consideration.

But this did not dampen the spirits of the Royal Navy coach, Sgt Graham Alderson.

"We may not have taken the title, but the boxers of the Royal Navy put on a brilliant display performing at the highest level at the home of Army boxing and beating the army on competitive bouts," he said.

Texas Heat too hot

CONGRATULATIONS to 45 Cdo on winning a close Navy Cup final against HMS Heron.

The only goal of the match came in the 53rd minute when man of the match Mne Ian Danby connected with a decisive pass from Mne Ian Syme on the left, and calmly directed it past the Heron (and RN) keeper AET Roy Emerson.

Otherwise this was an evenly-contested affair, with LAEM John Delahaye leading a stout Heron defence, and L/Cpl Garry McGonnell giving an impressive performance for the Marines.

Maj Gen Garry Robison, Vice President of the RNFA, made the presentation to the winning captain, Sgt Paul Barratt.

The highlight of the past month, however, came several thousand miles from home at the annual Dallas Cup International Youth Soccer Tournament.

This year's event, the 29th, saw the greatest number of competitors to date drawn from all over the football world with such great names as Liverpool, Eintracht Frankfurt and Sao Paulo to name but a few.

The RN U19 team has had the great privilege of taking part in the Dallas Cup since its inception by kind invitation of the organising committee and 2008 was once again to be an experience that the Senior Service would not forget.

The squad had prepared well for the competition, particularly since the turn of the year culminating with a victory over the Amateur



Onside with Capt Paul Cunningham, RNFA

Football Alliance in the Home Counties League.

The squad headed across the Atlantic in buoyant mood aided by a valuable coaching session with Stuart Pearce (England U21 Coach) and his assistant Steve Wigley on the day before departure.

On arrival the squad were met by a wonderful set of people who volunteer to host the players and staff throughout the contest and inevitably end up being surrogate parents not to mention passionate Navy fans.

After orientation and a light pool-based training session we continued our preparations using both indoor and outdoor facilities.

The time spent in Dallas is not all about playing football. The squad were fortunate enough to date drawn from all over the football world with such great names as Liverpool, Eintracht Frankfurt and Sao Paulo to name but a few.

A warm up game against an 'All Star' side from Mesquite resulted in a 3-0 win with two goals from AET Antonio Mosemeci (Sultan), and a third from AET Marvin Brooks (Culdrose).

The group stage began with a tough tie against Texas Heat. With the score at 1-1 with 20 minutes

to play, thanks to an ET Jamie Tipton (Sultan) strike, the game was in the balance.

Although Tipton 'scored' again to put the RN in front a rather dubious offside decision kept the sides level and it was Texas Heat who eventually ran out 3-1 winners.

Despite the lengthy preparations, the pace of the game and the harsh climate had its effect on the team – imagine playing mid-afternoon in August in this country against players faster and fitter than you are at one of the biggest football occasions of your life and you can probably guess what is going through the mind of a 17 year old sail.

The second game was against a strong team from Portland Oregon, Westside Metro Gunners. The U19s battled well against an exceptionally strong wind but sadly lost the game 1-0 conceding from a free kick which ended up crossing the line via the underside of the bar.

This result left a huge mountain to climb if the squad were to qualify beyond the group stages.

It is to the enormous credit of the team that they battled valiantly in the final game against a highly-rated team from Florida, IMG Soccer Academy and once again came off the losers by 1-0.

The closeness of the competition

was reflected in the fact that IMG went on to eventually qualify for the final in this hard-fought competition.

The U19s played one more friendly game before departing resulting in a fairly punishing schedule of five games in nine days.

The remainder of the tour saw the team take in the sights and sounds of the US with a particularly memorable trip to the rodeo and witnessed some outstanding football in the latter stages of the contest with Liverpool winning the U19 'super group' final.

The RN returned to the UK to rejoin their respective units after two weeks together and benefiting enormously from their experience, both as players and as young sailors.

It would be difficult to pick out a particular highlight from this year's tour although the opportunity to re-new old friendships and make new acquaintances continues to be a high point for both players and staff alike.

A healthy proportion of the 2008 squad will be young enough to return to Dallas next year, if selected, and will no doubt benefit from this year's experience.

Trials for the 2009 RN U18 and U23 Squads will begin early next season – players eligible for the Dallas Cup XXX in 2009 should have DOB later than 01/08/89.

Recommendations of suitable RN/RM players should be forwarded to CPO (PT) Paul Willetts in the RNFA Office at HMS Temeraire

Next month

Invasion past – HMS Ocean heads to the beaches of Normandy



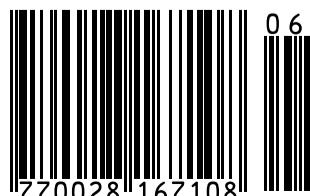
Invasion present – 1st Assault Group Royal Marines on the art of amphibious warfare



Bigger bangs for your buck – introducing the next-generation Seawolf

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**SPORT**

● Talk to the hand... Two RN players, including No.10 Mne Rob Lloyd, attempt to foil Spr Ben Seru

Navy can't halt the magnificent seven

THERE was no halting the red steamroller at Twickenham as the Army powered to victory for the seventh successive year.

But that does not mean that this year's Army-Navy rugby union clash was a one-sided affair.

The RN 1st XV had trounced the RAF at Burnaby Road, while the Army had stuttered to victory against the same opposition.

The 2008 'winner takes all' Inter-Services final was billed as the most anticipated in a decade.

And it did not fail to live up to expectations as both teams served up a thrilling red-blooded encounter which had the 50,500 Twickenham crowd baying for more, writes Roger Thompson.

The Royal Navy delivered the promised Nelsonian bombardment.

In a sentence they played high intensity rugby throughout the opening quarter, but then reinforced with more of the same.

After thirty minutes the storm had blown over, the Army counter-attacked, demolished the Navy scrum and then spread its wings.

The first try was a massive forward effort centred on a five-metre scrum where the Army effectively crushed the Navy set piece. After close-quarter exchanges Chris Budgen (Saints) seized the initiative and the ball and drove over.

From the restart the ball moved smoothly through many hands and when Apo Satala (Leeds) handed over to Darrell Ball just inside the Navy 22 it was an unopposed gallop to the white line.

In the second half the Reds' forwards again focused on a scrum close to the Navy line.

The exposure of the Navy's front five followed by repeated close rucking and mauling enabled loose head prop Melvyn Lewis to cross for the second prop's try.

The final Army score was an Apo Satala cruising special, a shrug here and a hand-off there broke the defence and he was left with a 20-metre saunter to the line.

At the close full back Wayne Dugan crossed for a well worked Navy consolation try to bring down



● Spr Seru looks as a team-mate is brought crashing to the Twickenham turf

Pictures: Sandra Rowse

the curtain at 22-11, ensuring the Babcock Trophy remained in the soldiers' hands.

Had the Navy managed to release the electric Josh Drauniniu it might have been different but the Navy's main threat was both starved of the ball or shackled by the Reds' defence.

Lt Cdr Geraint Ashton Jones the Navy's coach admitted disappointment at the result but he added: "We were encouraged, we believe there is more to come from this group of players and we know we can deliver an Inter-Services Championship."

Army skipper Mark Lee (L Welsh) led from the very front throughout, Budgen put in a superhuman effort in the short range game and No8 Joe Kava was the premier ball carrier.

The Army's Darrell Ball was named Babcock Man of the Match for a fine all-round performance in the tight, the line-out and open play, topped off with a superb try.

"We knew the Navy would come

full frontal – they have some very good players," said Army coach WO2 Andy Price (Welsh Guards).

"We planned to stay cool and focused, assert our authority up front and then counter attack. I am very proud of the way our people took the emotion out of the game and, by sticking to their guns, scored four good tries."

■ WE have the Royal Marines to thank for lifting the gloom... and putting the Army back in their box a little.

The Royals were crowned the 2008 Akrotiri Floodlit 10s champions in Cyprus when they defeated the Royal Signals 31-17 in the final.

Team manager C/Sgt Jan Hicklin assembled a good blend of experience and future talent to represent the Corps and the players clearly repaid the faith he had in them.

In the pool stages, the team recorded comprehensive wins against Akrotiri Griffons (60-0), Episkipi Eagles (28-14), ICT

Catterick (42-5), RAF Odiham (50-0), 25 Regt RLC (68-0) and Nicosia Barbarians (28-12).

Calum McCrae was top scorer with 12 tries during the group stages, with Josh Drauniniu and Scot Llewellyn hot on his heels with eight tries apiece.

However the backs would all acknowledge the excellent work done on their behalf by the former U23 trio of Ryan Wells, Damo Chambers and Gaz Evans who worked tirelessly up front.

The quarter final was against the RAF Chairman's Select and it proved to be a comfortable win for the RM team, 45 - 0.

However the team really showed their determination and desire in coming back from a 10-0 deficit to beat the Royal Welsh 17-10 in a hard-fought semi final.

The win puts some much-deserved silverware in the Corps rugby cabinet. Under Jan Hicklin's guidance they are playing good rugby at both the XV and ten-a-side game.



Nathan to fly the flag for Britain

THE new golden boy of Senior Service sport is LAET Nathan Gosling who returned from the National Age Group Duathlon Championships with a first prize in his age group.

The leading hand (pictured above in training) headed to Milton Keynes in Buckinghamshire for the race – a 40km (25-mile) cycle ride sandwiched between a 10km (6-mile) and 5km (2½-mile) run.

Despite only one year's experience in the duathlon, Nathan crossed the line in first place in his 25-29 age group – and claimed eighth spot overall.

That result also secured him a place representing Great Britain in the European Duathlon Championships in Greece, as well as the World Duathlon Championships and the World Long Course Duathlon Championships age group later this year.

As for the Milton Keynes race, Nathan began the first stage, the 10km run, at a fairly steady tempo and came into the first transition in the top ten with a time of 33m 53s.

He continued to work on the bike, with the athletes ahead of him prime targets. "My bike went really well," he explained.

"The rolling course suited the training that I'd been doing in Cornwall, and although I've improved since last year, there's still lots more to come from this discipline."

By the next transition he was in eighth place overall and first in his age group.

And those were places he held on to in that final stage, the 5km run.

He crossed the finishing line in an overall time of 1h 58m 5s.

Having won the RN Duathlon Championships and taken third place in the Inter-Services, Nathan hopes to race at the elite level in 2009 – providing he can squeeze his athletics in between his work with the Baggars of 857 Naval Air Squadron at RNAS Culdrose.

The day job has now taken him to RFA Argus in the Gulf, where a static bike and treadmill have replaced his more usual methods of training.

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